

THE GROUNDS OF  
CHRISTIAN BELIEF

---

F. W. BUTLER



g



Division

BR 121 .B88

Butler, Frederick William  
James, 1875-

The grounds of Christian  
belief









*The Grounds of  
Christian Belief*





# *The Grounds of Christian Belief :: By the Rev. F. W.*

✓ *Butler, lately Curate-in-Charge of Stanton Harcourt,  
Eynsham, Oxon. :: :: :: : :: :: :: :: ::*

---



LONDON : SKEFFINGTON & SON, LTD., 34,  
SOUTHAMPTON STREET, STRAND, W.C.2

*Publishers to His Majesty the King.*



## NOTE

“ Unless the reason is convinced, it is not possible for an emotional appeal to be permanently effective. . . . People generally, though their reasoning is instinctive and not formal, are profoundly if unconsciously influenced by the spirit of the age, and a message which does not respond to their mental wants will pass unheeded. . . . We would illustrate from Church history the importance of the intellectual appeal. If we examine the process by which the Christian Church conquered the ancient world, we shall see how one of the means which enabled it to do so was the possession of a theology (expressed in the current philosophical language) which, better than any other contemporary system of thought, corresponded to the needs of the time.”—From “ Report of The Archbishops’ Committee of Enquiry regarding the Teaching Office of the Church.”



## P R E F A C E

### A SURVEY IN VIEW OF CURRENT THOUGHT

IN this little volume I have sought to set forth the foundations and meaning of the Christian Faith in a way that will commend itself to men and women of the present day. A little book on simple lines will serve a useful purpose if it meets some of the difficulties of those who, though keenly interested in the things that count, might turn away sorrowing from a ponderous work. I have stated my aim in the hope that the readers for whom it is designed may not confuse my efforts with those of others whose writings they might fear would prove too exacting.

It is generally recognized that a gulf exists between the knowledge of the real masters of contemporary Thought and that of readers of ordinary or even of unusual education, who, about the matters which in the last issue are alone worthy of sustained consideration, ask: "Are these things so?" If this little book can in any way help to bridge that gulf, it will meet an acknowledged need.

Two impressive facts, then, prompt my task. On the one hand, there is a widespread lack of knowledge of the grounds in Reason, both of the acknowledgment of God and of the contents of the Christian Faith. On the other hand, there is a marked and growing trend among the representative thinkers of the day to make clear the rational basis of a spiritual view of life and reality. The exposition here undertaken of the foundations in Reason of belief in God and the soul, as these foundations are disclosed by the chief teachers of the day, is, however, but the indispensable preliminary for the accomplishment of my chief purpose, which is to present the grounds of Christian Belief in the light of modern knowledge.

Exponents of the Christian Religion are given at the present time a unique opportunity of setting forth its truth. The deeper Thought of the times is indeed for those who will let it carry them along with it to its inevitable goal, but "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." The Christian Creed is not a final conclusion of speculation: it has its own independent proof, its definite historical basis, and its constant verification in experience. But though it exists, and demonstrates itself, in its own right, its claim is one that Reason perpetually justifies, that profound Thought leads up to and vindicates both for mind and heart. I have endeavoured to make clear both these elements in the Christian Faith—its grounds in history and in experience, the way in which all deeper Thought either prepares the way for its presentation or brings out its deep implications in Reason.

The Christian Faith, when rightly estimated in its truth and moral demand, commends itself alike to mind and conscience. Especially with regard to the Work and Person of Christ, the intellectual estimate, the element of doctrine, is to the absolute moral value or unconditional imperative thereof but the other side of the shield.

There has been recently a considerable revival of aggressive Materialism. The Rationalist Press Association has found funds and increased its output, and, though Materialism is certainly a "back-number" in the domain of Thought, its recent popular presentations may gain for it, among those whose critical faculty is only slightly developed, a measure of acceptance not warranted by its merits.

A critical examination of the basis and claims of this survival of an outworn type of theory—the weak and beggarly elements of nineteenth-century Rationalism struggling for life in a new age—will, it is hoped, help many who desire to see things as they really are, and to approve the things that are true and are "more excellent."

## CONTENTS

### I.—THE SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT.

- The stirring of Thought—owing to the War—confirming previous stirrings—practical Materialism exposed. The verdict against Materialism—an outworn standpoint.
- The set of the Current toward spiritual ideas. The soul “a necessary hypothesis” for physical science. “Body and Mind.”
- The “general directions” of contemporary thought. Bergson, Le Roy, and the new epoch.
- The “new categories” of life, personality, spirit. Being-for-self—“A new world of thought”—The “over-individual.” The “Ought.” The Norms and Standards of the spiritual life.
- The “Values” of the spiritual realm. The Beyond which is within. Origin and Value—A. J. Balfour.
- Intellect and Intuition. “Good sense”—contact with life. Knowledge within reality.
- Action and interpretation. The life-process—the great alternative.
- Teleology of the spiritual life. The deeper affinities of current Thought—A theistic setting. A trend towards Christian positions.

### II.—THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION : ITS GROUNDS AND CHARACTERISTICS.

- A question of fact. The order of consideration of New Testament writings. The point of departure in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. The “boldness” of SS. Peter and John.
- The Gospels an ongrowth of the same distinctive experience—Experience and Fact—the “impression” of a Unique Personality. The testimony of Jesus to Himself.
- An impression which comes inwardly—finally independent of criticism. The material of Christian Knowledge.
- A study of presuppositions. Naturalism in the realm of New Testament criticism—The “religio-historical” method : its disproof. A converging testimony and a source of theory.
- The redemptive significance of Christ. The experience of the presence of the exalted Lord. The point of departure for Christology.

### III.—CHRISTIAN BELIEF IN THE LIGHT OF CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT.

Scope for presentation of Christian facts and doctrines through leading principles of Contemporary Thought :—

- (i) *Personality* : The meaning of "a psychological fact." A set of psychological facts in the typical Christian consciousness. The dependence of the facts upon a unique personal Fact. The unique Personality. His constant and present activity.
- (ii) *Intuition* : A method of penetration into living reality. Personal (*i.e.*, spiritual) discernment—intuition at its highest power—factors required for grasp of the Person of Christ.
- (iii) *Action* : The "task" of personality. Deeper knowledge gained through effort. The overcoming of "sense" and "things" a condition of growing insight. Truth grasped by an uprising of the soul. Knowledge of God through right direction of Will. The Person of Christ declared through His work.
- (iv) *The Conservation of Values* : Origin and Value. The Religious interest in the Church's affirmations (*a*) of the Gospel history ; (*b*) of the Fatherhood of God ; (*c*) of the Trinity in Unity.
- (v) *The Good which is in making* : Possibilities of the Universe not exhausted. Spiritual freedom and the task of the Kingdom of God—a reaffirmation of S. Paul.
- (vi) *The "Thickess" of Reality* : The fullness and richness of the Real. Thin Idealism. Room for the individual, for redemption, and growth.

The Christian religion valid in its own right, possessing its own independent proof and verification. The breaking of the notion of historical relativity.

Yet truth is one. The highest forms of truth capable of manifestation through the lower.

### IV.—THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

The actual problem of personality. Its solution by means of the Deed of Christ. The breaking of "the chain of things."

The problem of religion in its corporate bearings. Its solution by the historic and permanent Action of God in Christ.

A Word from above Nature. Supernatural Deed disclosing a Supernatural Person.

The Christian view of God.

Represent age face to face with Christ.

Message from the Synagogue in Capernaum.



# The Grounds of Christian Belief

## CHAPTER I (INTRODUCTORY)

### THE SPIRITUAL MOVEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

IT is a mere commonplace, but an important commonplace, to affirm that the present is a time when thought and feeling are profoundly stirred. The war has brought its own searchings of mind and heart and has added its own emphasis to all those questionings which for more than a generation have marked our age.

One conviction of the highest importance has steadily emerged and gained ground amidst a mass of impressions created by the war and the "distress of nations"—the need and demand for a spiritual foundation for individual and social life.

This conviction has been forced upon our minds in an intensely practical way. Before the war, warnings regarding the danger of a materialistic civilization were not wanting. To-day we see all too plainly how right those were who uttered the warnings. No one now can urge in reply to such warnings that "it doesn't matter what a man believes." Since August, 1914, we have been made to see that it does matter. We know better now. Our foes have taught us. Their brutal actions have proceeded forth from their materialistic ideas. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Their doings are the judgment and condemnation of practical and theoretic materialism, and they have left us the task of providing for the individual and the race a new spiritual culture and a new spiritual Thought.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Perhaps some such catastrophe as the war alone could have awakened us from our undogmatic slumbers and have recalled us to the necessity for clear thinking regarding spiritual values. The demand for clear thinking about the hidden issues was, however, there all the time, and will continue, after the war, with added urgency.

It is a matter of more than usual interest, and of supreme importance in relation to the real "after-the-war problems," to become aware that practical and theoretic materialism have both fallen upon evil days. The blow that materialism has received through the fact that it has stood in the light of day is one that it will not survive. The blow has followed that steady undermining of its vitality which has been effected by the best modern thought, by the main body of contemporary philosophers.

Though materialism had its vogue for many years it is now out of date. It represents a point of view which current thought has passed beyond. In reality it is an echo of the middle and last sections of the nineteenth century sounding from a distance into the twentieth. Its value even as an empirical descriptive instrument is now practically exhausted, and in the realm of physical investigation, equally as in the interpretation of life and individuality, it has proved unable to maintain its ground or to fulfil its promises.

This failure of naturalism is an established certainty of modern knowledge, though not yet realized by the masses. Its influence and prestige have been so marked that there is small wonder in the fact that they linger on as a tradition. The gradual filtering down of the solvent provided by contemporary science and thought will inevitably before long dispose of this illegitimate extension of an out-of-date spell.

The verdict against materialism finds abundant confirmation from a survey of the work of the leaders of present-day investigation and philosophy. The following is from a most useful summary of the scientific and philosophical conclusions of the times—Dr. Tudor Jones' "The Spiritual Ascent of Man" (Univ. Lond. Press, 1916):—"The history of the later half of the nineteenth century and of the first decade of the present will be looked upon by the thinkers of the future with a smile of strange surprise. Haeckel and his fellow-

# THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

monists will be remembered as those who could not conceive of any kind of reality which did not lend itself to the senses—as those upon whom it did not dawn that Thought is necessary in order to propound any theory, however childish it may be, and in order to bring each and every branch of science into existence and to promote its future development. But who asserts to-day that mind and thought are wholly physical things, or the products of things purely mechanical? No one, except a very few who are obliged to make assumptions as vast as those propounded in any traditional theology, and of far less real value than these. . . . The death of materialism has actually taken place, especially in so far as it is no longer a sufficient explanation of the origin of life, mind, and spirit.”\*

The fact that in contemporary investigation and thought naturalism means an outworn standpoint is evident from a survey of recent work in Physics and Chemistry. Investigation has brought into view certain phenomena which indicate in these domains the presence of non-material factors. The conclusion that scientific research forces upon the mind the recognition of the operation of spiritual forces has become evident and gained recognition—and that simply from increased acquaintance with the actual movements and characteristics of the subject matter of Physics and Chemistry. These branches of Science are by no means strongholds of naturalism.

Recent works,† such as those of E. A. Schäfer, W. Ostwald, H. Driesch and J. S. Haldane, supply definite and convincing evidence of the changed outlook of current science.

The conclusion which these representative contemporary scientists have reached after observation and experiment is that a non-mechanical factor is present in the working of various forms of animal life. A further conclusion is that, for the interpretation of human life, a new category—the spiritual concept of personality—must be adopted. Even

\* Tudor Jones : “The Spiritual Ascent of Man,” p. 6.

† E. A. Schäfer : “Life: its Nature, Origin and Maintenance.” Ostwald : “Natural Philosophy.” Hans Driesch : “The Philosophy of the Organism.” J. S. Haldane : “Mechanism, Life, and Personality.”

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

at the sub-human level it is quite inadequate to attempt to state the meaning of life in terms of mechanism. And, when we come to the higher levels of life, a spiritual philosophy of life and personality is forced upon us by the very facts which science observes and which the philosophy of science is called upon to explain. The influence of this verification of a spiritual philosophy, from the exclusive standpoint of natural science, is bound to be very great. Materialism has often appeared strong, because in years past it has been thought to be safely entrenched behind the ramparts of natural science. Now that this is seen not to be the case, but rather that those ramparts enclose a spiritual reading of life and reality, a powerful empirical defence of the philosophy of the Spirit is available.

We shall be able later on to see that a spiritual philosophy is not finally dependent upon such empirical support. Still, the fact that such support can be relied upon has its own special value in bringing home, to those who may still remain under the outworn spell of Naturalism, the truth of a spiritual individualism and of the spiritual nature of Reality. Abundant evidence is available in the works of the scientists just named that we do not explain any phenomena by a mere "description of the history of their physical clothing." A similar and equally decisive result emerges from the study of the relations of Body and Mind. After an exhaustive survey conducted by the methods of empirical science, the conclusion reached by a leading exponent of physical science is: "The conception of the soul is an hypothesis which is indispensable to science at the present time" (W. McDougall: "Body and Mind," p. xiv.).

Conclusions such as the above are of the highest importance, both as indications of the trend of current scientific theory and also as a proof of the reality of the soul, its substantial and immaterial reality. The observed phenomena have compelled a change towards a spiritual concept of existence and *religion, which always has had its assured philosophical and speculative basis, now stands invested with the added support of a basis which physical and mental science recognizes and enforces.*

As the assured grounds of a religious and spiritual view of

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

nature, life, and mind are progressively grasped by workers in the various departments of scientific investigation and theory, and as they are made clear to and grasped by the intelligent young men and women of to-day, the existing indifference to organized religion and worship will, without doubt, more and more pass away. The task before the present generation of thinkers and social and religious workers is to spread knowledge of the real contribution of physical science towards a spiritual philosophy, and to secure a return towards vital religion. Doubtless the new spirit, already present and existing in dynamic form, will find its own embodiment and bring about its own results. It will go far towards that lifting of individual and collective life on to religious levels which is the clamant need of the time. It will make its contribution towards the revival of reasoned conviction of spiritual reality which contemporary needs, experience and thought combine to establish.

The question is sometimes asked: "Is the age of Faith returning?" The answer to this question, so far as it can depend upon the intellectual demonstration of the demand for faith and the proof of the existence and working of Spirit, is that it has already returned. The return is present in spirit and in power in the actual position of contemporary science. When this position is combined with, and reinforced by, the still more pronounced spiritual trend of current philosophy in its wider aspect—an aspect which I shall indicate in this chapter and throughout the book—when finally the total trend of the bulk of recent Thought, with its emphasis upon personality and concrete personal experience and religious conviction is combined with the growing demand for a new spiritual culture and life, and with the positive and definite strength of the apologetic for the Christian religion and creed which I shall outline—when all these considerations, and many more like them, are taken, as they should be taken, in association and in cumulative effect, it becomes evident that Religion, and in particular the Christian Religion, has at the present time, at this time of the greatest need for it, its own special opportunity, force, appeal and proof. To vindicate and establish this fact is my present purpose, to show that the reality of God and the soul is growingly recog-



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

nized and enforced by current science and Thought, and in chief to show that the Christian Religion has its own convincing proof and demonstration at this time as always, and at this time of our special need for it especially.

Having thus briefly indicated my aim, it is of importance to have shown that even on the levels of physical investigation the reality of a spiritual factor finds scientific demonstration. This conclusion finds manifest support when we bring under examination the characteristics of man in his total nature. McDougall in his book, "Body and Mind," records how, though all his desire, so far as he was aware, was away from any belief in immortality, a purely empirical investigation of the connection of body and mind forced him to the recognition "within him [man] of something which is of a nature different from that of the body," and to the conclusion that life does not end with death. The concept of "personality" at once opens the door to a completely spiritual view of the universe, and as we take account of the implicates of life and individuality, of "values," of the "ought," and of "end and aim," we are grounded in the conviction that "this world, with all that lies within it, is a spiritual world" (J. S. Haldane: "Mechanism, Life, and Personality," p. 133).

The contrast between the main current of Contemporary Thought and that of the end of the nineteenth century is stated in a most emphatic way by the eminent French philosopher, Edouard Le Roy. In a chapter on contemporary thought in his exposition and critique of Henri Bergson, he gives, in his own charming manner, some clear indications of "the general directions of contemporary thought."\* The distinction of Mr. Vincent Benson's translation of Le Roy is so fascinating that I must quote, if only to lead readers to make themselves acquainted with this significant and important book. Le Roy glances "at the *milieu* of thought" in which Mr. Bergson's philosophy arises. "For the last thirty years new currents are traceable"—currents away from materialism and towards the recognition of spiritual freedom and the Life of the Spirit.

"One of the essential and frequently cited features of the

\* E. Le Roy: "A New Philosophy," p. 126 ff.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

generation in which Taine and Renan were the most prominent leaders was the passionate, enthusiastic, somewhat exclusive and intolerant cult of positive science. This science, in its days of pride, was considered unique, displayed on a plane by itself, always uniformly competent, capable of gripping any object whatever with the same strength, and of inserting it in the thread of one and the same unbroken connection." . . . "Conceived as the sole mistress of truth, this science was expected in days to come to fulfil all the needs of man, and unreservedly to take the place of ancient spiritual discipline. Genuine philosophy had had its day: all metaphysics seemed deception and fantasy, a simple play of empty formulæ or puerile dreams, a mythical procession of abstraction and phantom: religion itself paled before science, as poetry of the grey morning before the splendour of the rising sun."

"The deified science," however, was "powerless to go beyond the order of relations, radically incapable of telling us the origin, end, and basis of things." It was overcome and defeated when faced by "the only questions to which no man may ever be indifferent."

The failure of science with its geometrical rigour may be set in marked contrast with the new intellectual characteristics of our present age. As Le Roy says, this naturalistic attitude "is no longer that of the contemporary generation. In the religion of science we see nothing but idolatry. The haughty affirmation of yesterday appears to-day, not as expressing a positive fact or a result duly established, but as bringing forth a thesis of perilous and unconscious metaphysics. Let us go even farther. If true intelligence is mental expansion and aptitude for understanding widely different things, each in its originality, to the same degree, we must say that to reduce reality to one only of its modes, to know it in one only of its forms, is an unintelligent claim. That is, in brief formula, the verdict of the present day."

The above quotation sets forth in effective and yet in moderate form the change which has passed over current thought, the movement away from materialism and towards vitality, freedom and spiritual concepts. It is an important vindication of the claim made in this chapter that contem-

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

porary thought has finally and permanently discredited materialistic theories.

The positive movement of current thought, as part of the *milieu* of an effective philosophy such as Bergson's claims to be, means the rebirth of idealism. At the same time the task of idealism is seen to be something wider, more concrete, more inclusive, than "the old dreams of dialectic construction! Everything is now regarded from the point of view of life, and there is a tendency more and more to recognize the primacy of spiritual activity" (Le Roy).

Even at the time when naturalism was dominant there were not wanting those who were prophetically and intuitively aware of its limitations. Le Roy quotes Ravaisson, who in 1867 wrote: "Many signs permit us to foresee in the near future a philosophical epoch of which the general character will be the predominance of what may be called spiritualist realism, having as generating principle the consciousness which the mind has in itself of an existence recognized as being the source and support of every other existence."

Commenting on Ravaisson's prophetic view, Bergson has written: "What could be bolder or more novel than to come and predict to the physicists that the inert will be explained by the living, to the biologists that life will only be understood by thought, to philosophers that generalities are not philosophic!" The philosophical epoch which Ravaisson anticipated has come. In the very widest and most pronounced sense the actual living thought of the present time is a philosophy of life and of the spiritual nature of reality. The force of the current is every year becoming more powerful, and its set towards a religious idealism and a definite recognition of personality and God is becoming more pronounced. It is now quite impossible for naturalism to attempt its old rôle and to put forward its past claims. The task of thought is given to it by the actual spiritual uprising of the present, by the emphasis upon experience, by the actualities of life, by the characteristics of personality in its deep dependence upon the prior and creative movement of the Spirit.

When once all that our consciousness of self-existence implies is taken into account, the acknowledgment of God



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

becomes a necessity of the reason. The standards and norms of life and morality, which are our discovery and not our creation, show the existence of something over-individual and over-subjective. These norms and standards taken in their individual authority and in their collective insistence, point beyond themselves to their absolute Ground.

Though on the scientific level, at the stage of physical and biological inquiry, demonstration of the reality of Spirit is to be found, the whole meaning and convincingness of a spiritual philosophy is not gained on this level. The actual life of the soul, in its own intense inward reality and experience, personality as it is for itself, in its own self-subsistence, calls for recognition and investigation, and provides its own evidence of God. The intellectual life makes its own contribution, and the meaning of the Universe expresses itself in part through the conclusions and convictions of the growing mind. The reality which reason lays hold of is a discovered Reason over and above and independent of the discovering mind. The meaning of the Universe constantly manifests itself as something infinitely more than our own present possession. Especially when feeling and will add their own quota to the understanding, the over-individual element within experience gains its own witness and proof through its own activity. And when we rise to a view of personality, in the unity of its being-for-self, in the total oneness of its existence with its many phases, aspects and orientations—the total experiences of man's nature point beyond themselves to the one great Source of truth, beauty and goodness. These are positions which current thought needs as its postulates, and they become its axioms in view of the accepted principle of verification through working.

This slight outline of the present position of Thought has been made because the present situation clamours for a revival of reasoned conviction regarding personality and the constant presence and activity of the Spirit. The existing movement of scientific and philosophical theory has a definite and established place among the real live thinkers of the time. The chief need of the present is that their methods and conclusions should become well known, and their influence percolate to the multitudes who stand outside

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

in indifference, ignorance and inertia. The fact must be recognized and given its due weight that the real masters of present-day thought in science and in philosophy have laid the foundation of an effective religious philosophy, of a reasoned conviction of the reality of God and the soul. An unfortunate result of the lingering prestige of the outward materialistic creed is the fact that many persons are still, at least in appearance, indifferent or even hostile to the claims of religion. The divergence between the knowledge and conviction of the reality of Spirit possessed by the masters of knowledge and the ignorance of the positive grounds of religion and of the spiritual nature of reality, and of the fact of God and immortality which seems to characterize so many educated and less educated people to-day, is more than pathetic, it is appalling. On the one hand, there is "the new spiritual movement which many forces are now converging to produce, and which alone can recompense the world for the present war" (The Master of Balliol; Introduction to Dr. Tudor Jones: "Spiritual Ascent of Man," p. viii.). On the other hand, "it is necessary to become aware that science and philosophy work towards genuine religion, and possess knowledge which yields us a spiritual interpretation of the universe and of life."

In view of this contrast—the contrast between the real trend and testimony of current knowledge and the lack of spiritual conviction among so many who are thus missing the best gift of all—anything that can help to cause the knowledge of the real position of affairs to filter down into the minds of general readers must be of service. More definite and available information on these points is a constant need. There is hope here for the future. "When we view the past quarter of a century and see the enormous number of promising young men and women who have drifted away from institutional religion the picture is enough to sadden the most optimistic heart." So writes Dr. Tudor Jones, who adds: "How to create interest in the masses for the things of the Spirit is the great problem of to-day."

The need for the widespread revival of reasoned conviction is becoming widely recognized. The prestige of the great materialistic thinkers is on the wane: it has been trans-

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

cended by real thinkers. Unfortunately the popular influence of the materialistic theories has never depended upon the great exponents of those theories. If it had so depended, it would have lacked the strength which it unfortunately possesses, for the great exponents were always cautious, hesitating and reserved. Lesser men, "blind to every kind of reality which was not sensuous in its nature," have been the chief agents in creating the existing opaqueness to spiritual thought. The influence of the real masters of scientific theory has been but little. "T. Huxley, who on occasion could teach materialism of the most dogmatic kind, and in another mood would capitulate to spiritualism, sought permanent refuge in agnosticism; and, since his earlier and more militant essays, materialism has found no literary champion among British scientists. In dogmatic form it is to be found to-day, perhaps, only in the literature of secularist 'free' thought. Even the monism of E. Haeckel, which is materialism in all but its name, awakens no enthusiasm among scientific students in Britain: it is rightly regarded as involving an obsolete standpoint which science—more silent and cautious, if not more critical than formerly—has left behind" (F. R. Tennant: "Dictionary of Religion and Ethics," art., *Materialism*).

Materialism is, in brief, philosophy in a state of arrested development: uncritical in its judgments: neglectful of a good deal of the evidence. Our knowledge of matter and appearance is so much more direct, obtrusive and immediate than that of mind and spirit, that the uncritical acceptance of generalizations based merely on an observation of some features of the working of phenomena falls into line with a natural tendency to follow the path of least resistance. Thereafter it is all too easy to apply these generalizations, derived from notice of some of the characteristics of objects in the external world, to existences and processes of another and higher type. Yet all the while, even at the level of observation of material processes, especially when these are taken in their wider connections, there are appearances which are calculated to cause mechanical theorists to come to a halt. There is, for instance, the fact of order in the universe: a fact calculated to suggest a doubt as to the final validity of

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

materialism. As Dr. Tennant shrewdly observes: "If there be enough disorder to disturb the equanimity of the spiritualist and to put the theist in a difficulty, there is surely too much order in the world to allow the materialist to feel at home" (F. R. Tennant: "Dictionary of Religion and Ethics," art., *Materialism*).

The disproof of naturalism does not, however, depend upon the enumeration of phenomena which cannot be subsumed under a mechanical heading. Such phenomena, appearing at a natural level, are interesting and important supporters of a *spiritualistic*\* view, but the disproof of naturalism is independent of them. Naturalism carries about with itself the weakness of its epistemological basis. Knowledge involves the work and the activity of spirit; and what materialism fails to find in the end is there in the beginning. The initiation of any investigation and the formation of any theory implies the conscious exercise of mind in its essential independence of and command over sense. Science has to deal with facts, but the facts of science are not the sense-impressions which give rise to the investigation. Only by the activity of mind can we pass from appearance to fact.

The aim of science is to reach the facts, but these are not present at the outset, for, if they were, the sustained work of investigation, correlation and interpretation would be superfluous. The study of matter affords no ground for a naturalistic metaphysic. The separate departments of investigation call for their own unification, and so lead on to a "philosophy of science." But, in turn, the final results of a philosophy of science must be handed on to the mental sciences. The immanent logic of investigation forces forward the attempt towards yet wider and more comprehensive unifications. The goal of thought is always one and all-embracing. There is a *first domain*—itself by no means the refuge of mechanism—that of the objects which require classification, and of which the "facts" must be ascertained by an action which discloses the effort of mind. Thus the world of nature becomes knowable within a *second domain*,

\* The words "*spiritualistic*" and "*spiritualism*" are used throughout, not of course in their conventional meaning, but in their exact meaning as the definite opposites of "*naturalistic*" and "*naturalism*."

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

which embraces the first, that of mind : and a *third domain*, that of moral and religious values, is involved in the total process of the gaining of knowledge. The immanent logic and inevitable attraction of the goal of thought drives thought onward to a spiritualistic result. To physical science the observed characteristics of natural objects are the "things" or "data" which must be transformed by mental processes into the "facts." But these facts themselves are the *constructs* for philosophy or the theory of knowledge. Hence we must look to general philosophy to provide a real account of the nature of matter and the meaning of things.

For some generations past a materialistic tint has been imparted to statements both of physical and mental theory. This has been due to the ease with which description in mechanical terms may be made. Preoccupation with material facts and processes joined with the sense of competence aroused by the sweeping victories which attended the inductive procedure created an exaggeration of the scope of mechanical descriptive method. It has thus happened that students of the physical sciences have mistaken the naturalistic note for the necessary tone of both science and philosophy.

The criticism of materialistic theory, by philosophers of a more comprehensive habit of mind, has, however, established the fact that the principles and methods of scientific research imply that activity of spirit which is itself the refutation of naturalism.

The thinkers of a wider type just referred to have further disposed of the claim of materialistic theory to provide an account of *the whole* of reality. Interest in a *part*: such interest as marks the investigator of any department of scientific knowledge, may all too easily create either an ignoring of *the whole* or an unwarranted explanation of the whole by means of theories appropriate only for a part. The characteristic failing of thinkers of a naturalistic bent is this exalting of a part of reality at the expense of the whole. The goal of thought is one, and its temptation is to think that it has arrived already. There is, of course, the greatest value in departmental work, and each separate science has its own contribution to make to a total world-view. Still,



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

the whole is not merely the summation of the parts, nor the extension of a part to infinity.

Though the earlier pretensions of materialism are discredited by the present-day men of science and philosophy, it remains the fact that the grounds of refutation are not yet widely known, and, therefore, materialism retains an influence which is not legitimately its possession. A metaphysic which would resolve mental processes into material ones, reveals great crudity of thought, and however popular it may be, is of no philosophical value. A judicious criticism of its epistemological basis cuts away the foundation of any materialistic presupposition or theory,

Recalling the fact that recent scientific investigation has brought to light physical facts which are incapable of explanation by any mechanical process, we are confirmed in our judgment that the day of the predominance of mechanical hypotheses is past. Driesch, as a result of observation and experiment, has been led to the conclusion that certain observed natural facts require a non-mechanical theory of life to account for them. He holds that mechanical and chemical theories fail to explain some remarkable phenomena of recuperation of lost parts of the newt's eye to which he has given attention. J. S. Haldane also claims that from the scientific standpoint, especially for the interpretation of human life, we must transcend naturalism. McDougall also, in the investigation of the relation of Body and Mind, claims that observation shows the need for a non-mechanical hypothesis. Recent psychology also, the work of William James, Stout, Lloyd Morgan and others, joins hands with modern physiology and biology in the claim that consciousness possesses its own self-subsistence. The importance of these results for the thought of the future is very great indeed.

The limitations of materialistic theories thus made evident at the level of physiology, biology and psychology, become all the more evident when we rise to higher levels and take a more comprehensive view. When the total nature of man is taken into view, when the individual is regarded in his own being-for-self, an account in spiritualistic terms becomes inevitable. If the significance of modern work in psychology were adequately realized among the thoughtful

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

and educated, much might be done to overcome an indifference towards religion which too often prevails. When once the facts of the self-subsistence and immateriality of the soul are grasped, and the significance of the facts appreciated, the world changes its aspect. The way is made ready for a further step forward—this time a step which involves factors higher than those belonging to the intellect alone. The knowledge has to be transmuted, by an effort of will and decision, into an experience of the soul—the deep dependence of this orientation of the inward being upon the pre-movement of the Universal Spirit will hereafter be expounded. At this point it is sufficient to observe that when the facts which science and psychology demonstrate are seen in their full personal bearing, the problem becomes more than a matter of understanding. A deeper aspect of the question of spiritual life discloses itself, and discloses itself as a moral imperative—a question of will and response for the soul itself to answer, in view of the fact of God and the meaning and possibilities of personality.

I have thus briefly indicated the trend of the real thought of to-day for two reasons. It affords opportunity for an indication of the general grounds of the acknowledgment of God and of human personality in its spiritual meaning. It also establishes the fact that the real question for the day is not whether you may or may not profess any religion at all, but what must be the distinguishing marks of the religion which you must profess? It would have been difficult, though not impossible, to advance the proof of the Christian religion if some answer had not first been given to those who deny or doubt the claims of any religious view of reality at all. There can, however, be no *a priori* obstacle to the consideration of the distinctively Christian belief when once the necessity for religion is made plain from the scientific standpoint.

An important idea of which current thought makes considerable use is that of "degrees of reality." The more comprehensive concepts under which thought must operate have about them a higher degree of what is real than those less exhaustive and complete. The degree of reality which belongs to ethics and to personality is, for instance, in the nature of the case, higher than that which belongs to physics

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

or chemistry. Each distinct science is only departmental, and leaves an unexplained residuum to other and more comprehensive sciences. Thus the philosophy of science possesses more reality than any sub-division of empirical science has. We pass upwards to the spheres of Logic, Metaphysics and Religion, and as our concepts become more exhaustive and all-embracing we attain a still higher degree of reality. In them we find the postulates and final results of the various sciences co-ordinated and explained within a new world of thought.

A yet higher degree of reality is attained when we bring all this contribution of thought and experience into relation with the needs, demands, and ideals of personal life. The ethical and spiritual constraint upon personality, which is the witness of God and His own activity, crowns a structure of thought and experience in which knowledge is not all on the same level. For the gaining of knowledge and insight, within the higher domains, within the loftier stages of reality, higher, more complex and more spiritual aptitudes, responses, and reactions are requisite. If we are still to press on upon the pathway to truth and reality, certain new and higher qualifications are required for knowledge and still more for being. And still a certain attainment of being, a certain gaining of a higher type of soul, is required for the further knowledge which still beckons us on. The ideal of truth contains its own imperative, and the ethics of inquiry show that there is *an ideal of truth which means an over-individual constraint*. A true account of the implications of knowledge points to the necessity for something more than intelligence and information, and tells us that if we will truly know we must gain a certain quality or type of soul.

The bearing of the above consideration—the ethical demand implied in the ideal of truth—upon the evidence of the action of God is obvious. It prepares us to recognize that there are certain qualifications for knowing reality at its higher stages, which are more and higher qualifications than those provided by an insatiable curiosity or a profound but non-ethical or non-spiritual understanding. While remaining on the level of the ethics of philosophical inquiry, we can hardly fail to feel the force of the claim that only as we do the will of God we may hope “to know of the doctrine.” And when we rise to



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

the loftier degree of reality, and appreciate the meaning of morality and religion—in their own essential quality, as demands upon and effects within the soul itself—we can appreciate the contention that there is a vision of truth, beauty and goodness attained by *being* and a seeing which is the total soul itself gazing in spiritual mode. As we advance towards a more comprehensive synthesis of experience, as we rise to contemplate the highest mode of reality open to our ken, we come to a point where *something more than an intellectual assent to the proposition that spiritual reality exists is required, and where this knowledge must be transmuted into something more and higher than itself, into the suitable re-action of the soul and its response towards the Spirit, Who is thus drawing it forward to a higher, wider life and a more intense and vital grasp of reality.*

This upward constraint of the Spirit is involved in the ideal of thought, in the constraint of beauty, in the “ought” and imperative of goodness, and still more in the working of the supreme Source of beauty, truth and goodness, as one spiritual reality borne in upon the soul in its own self-subsistence in unity.

At this point we come into view of the independent demand for and validity of Religion. On the level of intellectual processes we find an ideal of Truth. This ideal conjoins with the ideal of Beauty and the further ideal of Goodness. These are absolute ethical worths and values. But there is a higher degree of reality also. The impulse towards unity finds its satisfaction, not in these ideals alone, not even in them conjointly, but in that which is the Unity of these three ideals. The absolute ethical ends in their unity disclose the Ground and Source of their distinct functions and values, and also of their harmony and oneness. Truth, Beauty, Goodness, are each absolute and over-individual Worths, and point beyond themselves to God, their living source and perennial Ground in their constraint, influence, and greatness. In other words, the mind implies and requires for its characteristic work of intellect, the ethical norms and standards and demonstrates the soul, and, *further, the soul implies and requires for its characteristic work of morality, and to give full value to its grasp of truth, beauty and*

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

*goodness, something more than even these principles : it requires God, the Unity of these separate principles and the Source and Origin of them both in their distinction and conjunction. Intellect proves and requires Ethics, and Ethics requires religion and religion's God. The soul rests only in the absolute Unity which is above even the distinctions of goodness, beauty, truth, being the one Source and Ground of them. The goal of thought is one, and the impulsion towards unity reveals itself, even at the scientific stage, and even further back than that. The goal of obedience is one and the goal of desire is the same. And all these goals converge into one, that beholding of God which results from the doing of His will. The necessity for religion is implicit in the most elementary stirring of thought.*

The lesson which the investigation of matter and life has yielded is emphasized and enforced by the study of human self-consciousness. Here we realize the demand for moral decision and the presence of the over-individual worths and ends. Having gained a view of the soul in relation to the body, a new and higher investigation forces itself upon our thought. We have to study the soul itself in its independent self-subsistence. We have to consider the meaning of personality, of the self in its own being and action, its capacities, values and aims. At once our subject gains in interest. We are getting nearer to that seeing of the parts in the whole which is the immanent logic of thought. Gaining a higher altitude we have a more inclusive view : we can see more of the landscape in one view.

The whole of man's personality is not occupied with the intellectual task. He is not a mere thinking machine. The "ought," the over-individual constraint or ideal, does not disclose its full significance at this level. Over and above the mental activity—itself a spiritual activity—involved in investigation, there are the responses of the self to the ethical constraints, the ideas and ideals which give stability, meaning and worth to the individual. Then, further, not only has the over-individual element its definite implication in personality : it has more, it has its own independent value, existence and worth. The "Ought" has its own reality, which we discover but do not make. Often its demonstra-

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

tion comes largely through an initial opposition to its demand. It cuts across the preferences, slackness, indifference, of the human individual. It sets before the soul its positive and uniform ideal ends, and is not only the witness that humanity is intended for a new and higher type of life, but also that there exists one independent Universal Spirit.

Not only must we gain information about personality and its spiritual values : *we must become what we know*. A higher degree of reality is only attained when the life is brought into obedience to the "Ought" or rather to the Universal Spirit whose voice the "Ought" is. An intense inner life, full of its own feeling, will, and thought, is created by this obedience which expresses a certain formation of soul. The inner life is so determined by the Spirit, that it finds its own place and lot within reality : it begins to touch its goal because it is brought into definite and personal contact with God. The universe and all that it contains takes on a new and richer tone and aspect as the individual merges, loses himself in that over-individual constraint which is itself the presence and working of Spirit. Being is more than knowledge, but it is a condition of the higher knowledge.

In the pursuit of the over-individual standards and worths, the individual progressively gains its own freedom and expansion, an evolution of his deeper nature. Knowing and being are two sides of one shield in the unity of personal experience. The norms and ends of the over-subjective Reality impress themselves upon the soul in its unity of knowing and being. Thus there is a Beyond which is within experience : such a Beyond within experience witnesses, through the infinite worth and absolute constraint of His Will, known in the ideals, ends, worths, presented to the soul, to *a More still beyond the beyond within*. The sense of this Beyond within experience, and its witness to a more without often finds literary expression, and is one great aspect of the mystical consciousness.

"Silence answering only strikes response reverberate on the soul,  
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all the sea."

SWINBURNE.

"And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond—  
Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea."

D. G. ROSSETTI.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

The standards of Truth, Beauty and Goodness towards which personality should move, and, in moving, become more definite, free and personal, have their own Values in themselves. By obedience to their impulsion, the personality becomes deeper and more worthy, but they owe their impulsion to their living Source. The whole nature of man is not limited to a touch by the ends in their distinct and conjoint value as principles. It reaches out towards a Self which is their ground. These each by itself or conjointly are not enough. They do not cover the whole need, nor completely fulfil the desire and will and thought of the soul, nor bring into activity in its highest mode the whole nature of man in its indivisible unity. We are in touch with More even than these norms and ideals, with the reality which comprehends and transcends them. Not the principles by themselves, not even the universal ideals of Truth, Beauty, Goodness in their majestic suasion, are enough. The soul seeks the power behind the manifestations, the Life of the Spirit creative of and upholding the standards. The impulse of the soul, of which the initial evidence is the unification of knowledge, reaches towards a unification of experience. It reaches out beyond impersonal ethics and idealism to religion and to God.

"If we transcend the outer world by our convictions we come to God : if we transcend the social world we come to immortality : if we transcend our own inner sphere and link it with religion we come to the belief in providential leading. In every one of these conceptions, the world of things and of men and of duties is developed into a system in which the logical, æsthetical and ethical demands are unified, in which the causal events of the universe and the moral duties and the desire for happiness are no longer in conflict." (Royce.)

There is, then, always a pressing upwards towards a complete unification of knowledge and life. The results of departmental investigation are handed on to a philosophy of science, and the outcome of that discipline in turn handed on to Logic, Ethics and Religion. *And in the life of the soul there is a kindred movement, effective so far as being keeps pace with knowledge, a movement which passes from Things to the Values disclosed through them, and from these Values to God*

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

*Who is their Source.* This contact thus established with the Divine Spirit affords its own new and further material for an increased knowledge of God through experience: the knowledge of God in His own Being-for-self and in His relations with human individuals. When we consider the upward tendency of the personality, in its inward unity, and the over-individual constraint which means the pressure of the personal Beyond, *the conception of God becomes a necessary and self-evident idea for a mind aware of its own capacity and worth.*

The spiritual Values in their unconditional quality bear witness to the nature of their unconditioned Source. The biological theory of their origin fails to account for them, because it introduces an element which would dissipate their validity, that absolute validity which a theory is called upon to explain. A theory which does not do justice to the characteristic qualities of these Values does not explain them.

The values themselves have, now, for more than fifty years, lost some of their essential and proper effectiveness because of the prevalence of the biological theory of ethics. In the ages when civilization was dominated by the Church and her positive beliefs and sanctions, humanity was sustained and led by an assurance of the Divine origin and the absolute worth of the spiritual Values. The values themselves were sustained and enforced by a system of concepts and rules which possessed a Divine sanction. The rise of a materialistic type of thought and civilization exalted expediency into the place of the expression of the Will of God. The price we are paying for this illegitimate and hopelessly unscientific displacement of God, and consequently of the rightly absolute sway of the spiritual values, is the theory of the State as above morality. *Having left off to recognize God, we have failed to do righteousness.* Our main need now is to get back the effective suasion of the absolute spiritual values by a true account of their origin. That we can only do by an enforcement and vindication of their dependence upon, and right through, their absolute and unconditioned Source. The return to a Christian Theism, and to the recognition of the supreme values enclosed in the realm of the Kingdom of



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

God, is more than a theoretic need : *it is an indispensable condition of the security of civilization, individual and social morality, and righteous peace.*

All the while there is something going on in the habits of thought of the masses which needs reversal, reconstitution, and a new orientation. What will prove the Fulcrum which will lead back the generations, the peoples, to the practical and inward obedience to God and to the knowledge of the absolute Worths as the expression of His Will? Only the revival of reasoned spiritual conviction, one phase of which is evident in the uprising of a spiritual philosophy which marks the real Thought of the twentieth century reinforced by *Christian beliefs and sanctions.*

Mr. Balfour, in his book "Theism and Humanism," deals in his own forceful way with the relation between Origin and Validity in Ethics, and states that his intention has been to show that all that we are bound to estimate best in human culture, "whether associated with beauty, goodness, knowledge, requires God for its support, that Humanism without Theism loses more than half its value."\* "If He be excluded from the causal series which produces beliefs, the cognitive series which justifies them is corrupted at the root. And as it is only in a theistic setting that beauty can retain its deepest meaning, and love its brightest lustre, so these great truths of æsthetics and ethics are but half-truths, isolated and imperfect, unless we add to them yet a third. We must hold that reason and the works of reason have their source in God; that from Him they draw their inspiration; and that if they repudiate their origin, by this very act they proclaim their own insufficiency."

Now when we keep in mind the importance of this "theistic setting," and also recall the practical ineffectiveness, among so many, of the ideals of righteousness, graciousness and knowledge, the real problem of present-day life at once is before us. The problem has found voice among some thinkers from whose works I have quoted. It has been seen by others, who write from the standpoint of the preacher, priest and prophet. I remember reading some years ago "The Opportunity of the Church of England," by the present

\* Balfour : "Theism and Humanism," p. 248 and p. 272.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Archbishop of York. In it insistent emphasis is laid upon the necessity of "meeting the challenge of facts," of answering "the special and imperative summons" to the bringing about of a revival of reasoned conviction among the masses of the people, and especially among our educated young men and young women. The same demand is put forward, for example, by the Bishop of Liverpool, in a "Foreword" to Mr. J. H. B. Masterman's "Lectures on the Christian Idea of God"\*: "In an age which has realized the paramount duty of the Church to preach the Gospel to the poor, and which is characterized by a feverish and abnormal activity, there is no slight danger of the Church neglecting men and women of thought and culture, and of leaving them unassisted in their efforts to solve some of the great doctrinal problems by which they are faced."

The situation which the above extract discloses, viewed in the connection with the state of affairs produced by the long dominance of the biological theory of the great spiritual values, is a difficult and painful one. The prevalence of anti-theistic tendencies conjoined with religious indifference is a great foe, which should be greatly met. It may be too much to hope for, but the present writer would like to see a National Mission having for its aim the revival of reasoned conviction among the educated, with an appeal on the same lines to the less educated. In its organization and working some of the great thinkers (also, by the way, effective speakers), leaders of the present movement of Thought, might find their place and opportunity. Some existing societies and departments might form its nucleus. On a broad basis, and with a keen intellectual and moral interest, such a mission of instruction and enforcement of the grounds of religious belief, and of the fact of God, would be a valuable and perhaps an indispensable forerunner of an effective Mission, which would finally lead to a return, as the writer must desire, to that Catholic Church and faith which are the only effective safeguards both of life and thought.

And the sense of need which has called forth this expression

\* "The Christian Idea of God : Three Lectures," by Rev. J. H. B. Masterman ; Liverpool Diocesan Board of Publications ; p. 2.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

of hope for the nation also affords my excuse, and more than my excuse, for writing this book. I am painfully aware of my own limitations with regard to style and arrangement of matter. Still, my justification and my impulse come from something which alone can enable me to go on despite lack of time, distractions of other work, and sense of personal disqualification. As I meditated upon the real and definite awakening of spiritual belief and thought among the real thinkers of the day, and the contrast between this and the indifference, disbelief and hostility to Christian belief and to the Church among so many, I felt I must write, not for my own sake, but because of others. My resolve has been carried out—I hope not altogether without effect, not because this is for me an interesting topic for intellectual treatment, but because, in my own measure and despite kindred disqualifications, my position is like that of the herdman of Tekoa when he was sent to prophesy about Israel. If it should be objected that such an impulse could hardly result in the production of an apologetic treatise, my reply would be that that at least is not the verdict of the live thinking of to-day, for one of the notes of contemporary thought is the tendency of philosophy to come from the study “into the market-place” and preach.\* This despite the fact that it is sometimes, I am sure untruly, said that the preacher is not popular among philosophers, nor the philosopher among preachers.

An interesting indication of the change that is passing over the mental outlook to-day is provided by the work of *Henri Bergson*. Mention has already been made of the survey of Mr. Bergson's work, in its relation to contemporary thought, given by E. Le Roy. Several of the main currents of present-day Thought find their expression in Bergson's work. The fact of its wide affinity with the general movement of thought may be somewhat obscured by Bergson's unfortunate use of philosophical terms in a sense more or less different from the conventional and accepted. This, which is a tribute to the elasticity and originality of his thinking, is also an explanation of the fact that he has often been misrepresented.

\* See Boyce Gibson: “A Peace Policy for Idealists,” “Hibbert Journal.”



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Those writers who found in Bergson's intuition something which is outside of intellect have missed his intention.

Bergson's account of the main task of philosophy is that it has to do, what science cannot do, comprehend life. "Knowledge is for life and not life for knowledge." The intellect has been formed from life to serve the purposes of life's activity. In relation to the mind, the intellect is what the eye is to the body. It serves the purposes of mind, while at the same time it qualifies and restricts its outlook. The practical purpose of the intellect creates short views, "snapshots of reality," which obscure the issue as much as they disclose it, and which create fictitious problems.

Bergson's great image in illustration of his theory of intellect is that of the cinematograph. The intellect is to reality as the views arranged in succession along the film are to the picture. The reality itself, the *living* picture thereof, is only gained by the restoration of the movement. It is a continuous change, not a series of fixed states.

There is, however, a means of getting into touch with reality, of restoring in the mind the movement which makes it living and real. Bergson finds this in *intuition*. By a kind of "intellectual sympathy" we may place ourselves within the living movement of reality. This intuition is itself the awareness of life which we have, in our whole personality, in actual living. This awareness of life must be used to afford a knowledge of reality.

By this doctrine of intuition: its function in the understanding of life, Bergson makes his special contribution to the theory of knowledge. Intuition discloses a power in human personality beyond the reach of any *a priori* generalizations or abstract and static theories. Fixed concepts and general ideas provide short views of reality useful for the immediate and practical purposes of life: only as we sink deeper into the hidden and enduring self can we catch the meaning and feel the pulsation and flow of our own duration through time.

The main intention of Bergson, as explained by Le Roy, is to show that there is a more exact, more genuine form of knowledge than that of concepts, of the generalizations which the intellect uses. There is a life, a depth of personal exist-

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

ence, which is more vital and more capable of contact with reality than that of the empirical mind. There is, over and above, the mental activity which is limited to the snapshot views, the deeper life of the spirit which restores the movement of reality, because it is life itself, and has its place within life, the real. "A lamp almost extinguished, which only glimmers now and then, for a few moments at most. But it glimmers whenever a vital interest is at stake. On our personality, on our liberty, on the place we occupy in the whole of Nature, on our origin, and perhaps also on our destiny, it throws a light feeble and vacillating, but which, none the less, pierces the darkness of the night in which the intellect leaves us."\*

The demand for an understanding of life more penetrating than that which the understanding with its static view can afford, comes clearly into view when we consider the meaning of consciousness of self. Each distinct self is what it is for itself alone in its own incommunicable inward experience. What is that which constitutes a man as *himself*? How can we catch upon our souls the impress, and not only the impress, the very life, movement and duration of the self in its own uniqueness?

The self has a reality which endures, persists, outstays time, and remains in itself. General concepts do not avail to reach and describe the personality in its own definite being-for-self. And yet it is this own distinctive existence, in its own intense and living personal distinctiveness, which is the reality and which, if unexplained, means that nothing is really grasped.

The initial form of "philosophic intuition" is found in what Le Roy designates "good sense"—"good sense" as distinguished from that "common sense," which is a rough draft of positive science. "It is a sense of what is real, concrete, original, living, an art of equilibrium and precision, a fine touch for complexities, continually feeling like the antennæ of some insects. It contains a certain distrust of the logical faculty in respect of itself: it wages incessant war upon intellectual automatism, upon ready-made ideas and lineal deduction; above all, it is anxious to locate and to weigh, without any oversights: it arrests the development of every

\* "Creative Evolution," p. 282.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

principle and every method at the precise point where too brutal an application would offend the delicacy of reality ; at every moment it collects the whole of our experience and organizes it in view of the present. It is, in a word, thought which keeps its freedom, activity which remains awake, suppleness of attitude, attention to life, an ever-renewed adjustment to suit ever-new situations. Its revealing virtue is derived from this moving contact with fact, and this living effort of sympathy. This is what we must tend to transpose from the practical to the speculative order."

It will be seen at once that the problem raised by the reality of life and movement is one that is not soluble by the intellect operating with static concepts and fixed views. Something more is needed, and "good sense" marks out the beginning of the way. Something more is needed, it must be noted, in order to get to grips with the reality within and beyond appearances, and, therefore, something is needed which shall more truly and readily impart knowledge of what is vital than is possible to the discursive understanding.

And here we come upon an important element in Bergson's doctrine of intuition—indeed, its formation and essential element. Intuition is the instrument appropriate for the discovery of living reality. Real knowledge of life is not open to the intellect as such, but it is open to that philosophic intuition of which "good sense" is the portal. Intuition is not the substitution of mere feeling, or the sense of immediacy by itself, for knowledge. It is rather the means whereby the living reality is gathered up within an awareness which is knowledge at its highest power.

For the "intellectualist" the problem of knowledge is a problem in formal logic ; but nothing is more certain than the fact that such a method means the missing of truth. Life, the movement of reality, is not knowable under the moulds of the intellect, but it is knowable through that plunging of the self into the actual movement which is intuition.

The exercise of "good sense" and the reality and power of insight are matters of common observation : it has been reserved for Bergson to emphasize their philosophical significance and to erect upon them and all that they imply the

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

foundations of his doctrine of intuition. He has given convincing expression to the idea that here a solution is to be found of the problem of knowledge. The considerations which underlie his theory—the depth of personality and its living contact with life—the sense of immediacy which is the companion of perception—have been recognized of old. But it has been left for Bergson to show that in this contact and in this immediacy, and not by any abandonment of them, in order to follow intellect with its cuts across reality, by the use of the sympathetic immersion of the self in the movement of life, we shall be able to gain the knowledge of the reality itself.

It is important to grasp this interpretative value of intuition according to Le Roy and Bergson: their doctrine has often been misunderstood. There is no advocacy of the blind feeling or instinct which marks the uncivilized stage of humanity. Rather there is the claim to provide a solution of the problem of knowledge: the problem is seen at its full value and the organ of true knowledge, which they claim to be intuition, is disclosed.

That they have made clear an important distinction is manifest, and that they have started the problem of knowledge in its most exacting and living form constitutes a contribution both to thought and life which cannot be overestimated. The movement of reality being itself mobile, the form of mind which can compass and react it must be mobile: it must feel the pulse of reality and reproduce the rhythm of its progress. To break reality into pieces is to falsify it; it presses the soul beneath the sense and the life which makes it what it is.

The short views of the intellect, views formed for practical purposes of limited range and of no final validity, distort the actual features of reality. Only as we enter into the reality itself, so plunging into it by sympathetic self-mergence therein that we know life through life itself, can we restore that which intellect has lost and gain the sight of the true face of things. Instinct, sympathy, genius, intuition—these point out factors in true understanding to which Bergson gives philosophical valuation. No more real problem was ever before thinkers, and no answer more promising than that which Bergson has provided.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

The value of Bergson's doctrine of intuition for a spiritual philosophy of life consists partly in its penetrating criticism of general concepts. At the touch of these wide and immobile generalizations living fact is dwarfed and analysed away. The fullness of man's life is not to be found in them. Over and above these external aspects of individuality which may be more or less described in static and general terms there is the life of the self in its own living quality—its life for itself in its own incommunicable discreteness. It is not necessary, and certainly not possible, to claim that Bergson does more than hint at the immense range of a true philosophy of life and personality. Still, it must be remembered that his philosophy is only at an initial stage, and that he recognizes that it has only so far dealt with certain points. But when we combine his great and pregnant view of Intuition with his valuation of "intellectual sympathy," and that grasp of personality in its duration through time, we cannot fail to recognize the wealth of his insight and the quite unique value of his attitude and discernment.

Le Roy has some penetrating observations regarding the mistake of limiting the development and expression of a new point of view to those expressions which it has already attained. "There is no doctrine, on the contrary, which is more open" (than Mr. Bergson's), "and none which, in actual fact, lends itself better to further extension."

In summing up the attitude of thought indicated by Mr. Bergson's existing work, Mr. H. Weldon Carr thus speaks of the real tendency of this attitude: "Philosophy reveals to us a reality which is consistent with the satisfaction of our highest ideals. It discloses the life of the spirit . . . the reality of life is essentially freedom. It delivers us from the crushing feeling of necessity that the scientific conception of a close mechanical universe has imposed on modern thought. Life is a free activity in an open universe."\*

At the conclusion of his "Introduction to Metaphysics," Bergson makes use of an interesting and revealing illustration, which sets forth in an illuminating way the function of intuition and its revealing power. He shows how this faculty of sympathetic insight has constantly to be exercised

\* H. Weldon Carr: "The Philosophy of Change," p. 91.



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

in ordinary life. "Anyone who has attempted literary composition knows well that when the subject has been long studied, all the documents collected, all the notes taken, we need to embark on the actual work of composition, something more, an effort, often very painful, to place oneself suddenly in the very heart of the subject, and to seek as deep down as possible an impulse to which afterwards we shall only have to let ourselves go. This impulse, once received, projects the mind on a road where it finds both the information which it had collected and a thousand other details as well; it develops and analyses itself in terms, the enumeration of which would have no end; the further we advance, the more we discover; we shall never succeed in saying everything; and yet, if we turn sharply round towards the impulse we feel behind ourselves to grasp it, it escapes: for it was not a thing but the direction of a movement, and though indefinitely extensible, it is simplicity itself. Metaphysical intuition seems to be something of the same kind. What corresponds here to the documents and notes of literary composition is the sense of observations and experiences gathered together by positive science. For we do not obtain an intuition from reality—that is, an intellectual sympathy with the most intimate part of it—unless we have won its confidence by a long fellowship with its superficial manifestations."\*

The passage is important chiefly because it sets forth the fact that intuition is not a reversion to blind feeling or an uncritical immediacy. Rather it is the synthetic grasping, in one simple act, of the whole which the different portions of the analysis sets in distinction, if not in confusion. The same power resident in sympathetic identification is illustrated by a consideration of a character whose adventures are related in a novel. No enumeration of the hero's characteristics and exploits can give that revealing touch which comes only "if I were able for an instant to identify myself with the person of the hero himself!" This sympathetic understanding and indivisible feeling alone provides the point wherefrom all the words, deeds and traits would be seen to be natural, inevitable and consistent. These illustrations cannot fail

\* H. Bergson: *Metaphysical and Moral Review*, January, 1903.



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

to make the fact of the deeper life of personality in its own inward movement clear to the mind, and to show the necessity for a philosophy of personality. After all, we are able to make these movements of intellectual sympathy, because we ourselves, as human beings, possess a life which the mere understanding is not competent to explain and which calls for its own interpretation in its unshared and inherent ascendancy over "things." The demand for a new method of gaining knowledge arises from the fact that the mind of this present age is awakening to the recognition of its spiritual wealth.\*

We have very briefly touched upon the contribution made by Bergson to a philosophy of life and change, and have alluded to its setting in an atmosphere of contemporary thought. The indications of the set of the current of Thought towards the recognition of spiritual values, which the work of Bergson, amongst others, indicates, are further evinced by another influential thinker—R. Eucken. Bergson's great word is *Intuition*; Eucken's great word is *Action*. Eucken's contribution to thought is his vindication of the interpretative value of Action. His philosophy is an Activism. For him "the problems of life are solved by the life-process itself."

Eucken also has his criticism of Naturalism, based, not only on its intellectual disqualifications and the faultiness of its method, but chiefly on the fact it is the permanent opponent of a spiritual philosophy. Naturalism stands not only for a certain view of things, but also for a negative attitude of

\* The meaning of Bergson's theory of Intuition is quite missed by those who claim that he bids reason take, "if not the lowest place among the human faculties, at least one of considerable humility." For one thing he does not contrast intuition with "reason" but with "intellect," i.e., "the understanding without the heart," that which fails to grasp the presence of the deeper life of the spirit beneath body and beneath intellect operating upon phenomena of the physical world. Bergson's position is that material of the highest value for knowledge is provided by this living effort of sympathy—material handed on to Reason, the higher Reason, for inclusion in Reason's final synthesis. The positive value of Bergson's contribution consists in the vindication of the insight which personality may gain, in the unity of its consciousness, despite the *mirage* created by the discursive understanding, preoccupied with external objects. It must be allowed, however, that Bergson's use of technical terms to which he gives an unusual connotation is calculated to create misconception of his meaning.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

soul towards the life of the spirit. It impresses the spirit into the service of sense. It is the great enemy, on the theoretic side, of personality, and must be greatly met.

The spiritual quality of personality and the fact of its contact with the Universal Spirit are axioms for Eucken's thought. The richness of man's being, the real content of his inner life, is not found on any natural level. The rights of personality must not be betrayed in the interests of a facile monism or a treacherous optimism. The soul finds itself, and personality moves towards its goal, only as it breaks with the *first immediacy* of sense and in the strength of the sustaining contact with Spirit. It is as a doctrine of grace that we grasp the essential meaning of Eucken's philosophy of the spiritual life. We are not left to accept a given reality, nor to remain subservient to the values of "thinghood," but "by a salvation straight from God" to claim and make effective the independent and supernatural worth and origin of personality. The one side of the uprising of the self to its real stature is the "breach with sense," or with "the first immediacy"—that "negative movement" which is the renunciation of any acquiescing in the merely given. The other side—the positive side is that uprising towards the "new immediacy" which has the universal Spirit for its atmosphere or "new environment." Great changes thus pass over the soul, and it is made still greater in its possibility of spiritual stature and attainment. Our spiritual freedom depends upon our response to the "saving initiative of God," and we realize our own meaning and possibilities, and find before us the possibilities of personal growth through response to God and in fellowship with Him.

The new Environment brought about our souls gives us our liberty, and our task in that positive emancipating Movement which has in view the redemption of the world into harmony with the ideals of the spirit.

The negative movement does not mean that we must stand aloof from social and practical life. "It implies a renunciation of any and every mode of social and personal life that hinders us from assisting in the betterment of what is spiritually genuine in the construction of society. It implies that we have given up the idea of abetting, by our

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

passive acquiescence, a form of life which we inwardly feel to be vain and hollow. It implies the simple truth that if we wish to regenerate the world and the flesh, we must first renounce the devil."\* This is the movement which means the vindication of our personality, and implies a break with both Naturalism and an impersonal or static Idealism. The positive movement of the soul consists in its effort to contribute towards the redemption of the world into harmony with the spiritual ideals.

The positions, which are central to Eucken's philosophy, are, of course, great religious positions, and the point of interest is that here they are given philosophical valuation. The concepts of "grace," "redemption," "saving initiative of God," have with their own special fullness and context a determining place in religious history, and their place in a personality philosophy is evident from Eucken's exposition. It is an important indication that the wall of severance between religion and philosophy becomes thin whenever a reasoned attention is given to the real problems of life and individuality. In combination with Bergson's intuition and his destructive criticism of static concepts, the advance, made by these two thinkers, towards a genuine philosophy of religion, which does justice both to personality and to the dependence of the soul upon God, is very noteworthy.

That the redemptive process rests upon the dependence of personal spiritual freedom upon the saving initiative of God is the fundamental principle of an ethico-religious philosophy of life. There is, in the depths of personality, and evinced as the soul rises through the action of God to its stature, an interpenetration of the soul by God, which means our liberation from a sense-enslaved, self-centred selfhood into a God-centred personality.

The contrast between "high" and "low,"—perceived within experience and calling for, as an "ought," preference of and action of will towards the "high,"—bulks largely in this type of teaching. There is nothing very new in all this; it is merely a modern presentation of S. Paul's doctrine of the contrast between the "flesh" and the "spirit"—and that fact shows its chronic continuance. Nor is there anything

\* Boyce Gibson: "Eucken's Philosophy," p. 19.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

very fresh in "the great alternative" presented to the soul by these abiding contrasts. The deeper thought of the times shows a marked tendency to revert to the positions which have always been the commonplaces of Christian spiritual teaching. Such a fact is not without its interest in its indication of the abiding and constant human value of the great biblical conceptions. Indeed, the best statements of the really influential Thought of the day are but wide generalizations of central Christian ideas taken out of their context and evacuated of their historical antecedents and setting—certainly not to their gain in effectiveness. The fact that the great problems of personality are permanent and that the main features of their solution are constant finds confirmation, for instance, in Eucken's view of the meaning of freedom. Once a human being decides for the highest, he is on the high road to complete freedom. This freedom is not going to be won in a moment, but must be fought for by the individual through the whole course of his life. His body is always with him, and will at times attempt to master him—he must fight continually to ensure conquest. Difficulties will arise from various quarters, but he is not going to depend only upon his own resources . . . the more we appropriate unto ourselves of the Universal Spiritual Life, the more we decide for the higher world, the freer we become. Indeed, "it is this appropriation . . . of the spiritual life that first awakens within the soul an inward certitude, and makes possible that perfect freedom . . . so indispensable for every great creative work."\*

Now the above are not only great spiritual truths—and the great thinkers of the day are stating their value for a philosophy of life and reality—they are also, in a Christian context, the commonplaces of the doctrine of the new life. Enough has already been shown of the profound spiritual significance of the deeper movement of present thought to demonstrate its value for a religious estimate of life. It provides the surroundings in which Christian doctrine and conviction gain their opportunity.

The insistence upon personality does not imply any hostility

\* Dr. A. J. Jones : "Rudolf Eucken : A Philosophy of Life," p. 59.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

to Idealism. All it does is to deprive static and quasi-impersonal Idealism of its thin and empty impersonality. It invests Idealism with life and movement, and safeguards the independence, integrity and selfhood of the individual. Thus it adds richness and tone to a total view of reality. By it the movement of the universe is disclosed as action and fellowship, as well as knowledge and thought. The issues of life lie, not so much with the analytic reason, as with the spiritual insight (or higher reason), and especially with will, action and response. As we resolutely commit our souls to the tasks of life, they gain the fixity which means an inward and concrete personal experience. Still more—the process whereby we grow towards this fixity of character and being depends upon and brings with itself the sustaining presence of the Absolute Life. That Presence we can only appreciate as we gain our spiritual freedom in religious dependence upon God. The immediacies of the outward and of the hard-and-fast actual are displaced by the new immediacies of the Spirit.

The conception of God, and also the conception of the soul as a free spiritual existence, are not ideas that spring out of illusion or superstition. They are both of them conceptions which an intelligent view of the sciences and of human life finds to be inevitable and necessary. That reality of the "over-individual" which recent Thought has emphasized on the level of philosophical interpretation gains in force and demonstration whenever the human facts which call for a philosophy of religion are kept in mind. Indeed, when Thought presses towards its final problems, views its most comprehensive concepts and data, the language of religion becomes its necessary mode of speech. Whenever a vital solution of the questions, the most inclusive and exhaustive questions, of knowledge, individuality and life, is gained, the barrier between Theology and Philosophy is not merely broken down, it ceases to exist.

The existence of a deeper mode of knowledge than that of the discursive intellect witnesses to the deeper life of the spirit. It is in this deeper life of the spirit that reality is most assuredly known. Contact is effected with Life, and, therefore, with the Real, in the inmost recesses of personality.



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

There are degrees of reality, but the highest degree of reality open to our perception is discoverable through spiritual intuition.

The soul has its own distinctive and independent subsistence and immateriality: exists in its own centre, qualities, activities. This is one of the definite results of investigation at first through empirical science, and then, in higher form, through an adequate philosophy. The realization of that spiritual centre is a first step towards the appreciation of the meanings and values of existence. Further, the disclosure and valuation of the place of Action in the progress of the soul and in the gaining of knowledge is one great contribution of a spiritual philosophy, and a leading characteristic of the contemporary thought-movement. A sustained acquaintance with the real problems of ethics and individuality has caused thought to move far beyond the idea of impervious spiritual units and the undifferentiated Absolute. The fact of God is seen to be so deeply implied in the meaning and powers of personality, that meaning and those powers seen to be so definitely originated, sustained, advances by the protecting furthering Contact—that the problem of a valid Idealism appears as a religio-ethical one. The idea of God towards which thought moves is that of "Person": its leading idea, "Spirit," being identical with "Person," for "Spirit" means that which has permanence, mind, will, activity—in short, has all that we mean by Personality. Not only has recent Thought, the dominant thinking of the present, which is preparing us for the dominance of spiritual ideas in the near future, overcome and relegated to obscurity the naturalistic hypothesis: it has done much more, *it has passed beyond the agnostic stage also; it expresses its deeper trend in great theological affirmations*, in which the ethical is one with the metaphysical—concepts of the "Over-individual," "Ought," "Spirit," "Life," "Action"—without neglecting the more comprehensive and effective word "*God*."

The revival of *Teleology*, its definite recognition both in some departments of physical inquiry and in a wider philosophy, is a characteristic note of the times. The whole concept gains in cogency when viewed in the wider setting provided by the advance of investigation. The presence of



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

“Directivity” throughout the evolutionary process, the frequent emerging of the new, this *new* becoming progressively more and more akin to *mind*, the total trend towards *man*, with his self-consciousness, constantly forces itself upon thought. From this standpoint the idea of “Purpose,” or “End-in-view,” reinstates itself growingly.

When the place of “teleology” in physical and chemical facts and changes is conjoined with the teleological character of human life and history, the Providential order of the universe discloses itself. The linked continuity and identity of the immanent Purpose is something which cannot be attributed to finite consciousness. Bosanquet states in an emphatic way the manifold indications of this purposiveness, both on the physical and human levels. “There is teleology below consciousness . . . if something analogous to volition moulded the structure of the body in earlier phases of evolution, it never moulded them by any conscious wisdom in the mind of that phase; it followed, almost blindly, the determining of a deeper wisdom, which lay hidden in the general structure of the environment. . . . Say here, as was said of man, that mind is present from the beginning: still it is present in forms so elementary, that they must on the whole be moulded rather than moved.” The disclosure of the working of directivity in the physical processes and in the wide sweep of human life, thought, and activity contributes its own reinforcement to the spiritualistic trend of Thought. In fact, the pressure of facts is fast carrying positive science itself, by empirical methods and from observation and experiment, to idealistic conclusions and points of departure.

The pressure of Purpose, with its directivity throughout life and the universe, finds its subjective counterpart in that “venture of reasonable faith” which underlies both science and religion. The “trustworthiness” of the universe is not only a final conclusion of thinking: confidence in it is the ground and cause of any scientific thought at all. There is “the common cosmic faith in the constancy of natural order.” There is, further, the teleological faith which underlies the common cosmic faith. When the foundations of social and economic order, along with the moral foundations of society, are taken into account, this “cosmic faith”

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

takes on a new range and orientation. The cosmic faith inevitably involved in scientific progress issues in confidence in the deeper moral order of the universe. The final outcome is a supreme personal and religious confidence in the absolute trustworthiness of the Spirit Who discloses Himself through the total process, in its cosmic and moral factors, and Who, as Spirit, is known as the uncaused Cause. No concept can be formed of an uncaused Cause except that of Personal Spirit.

The grasping of the total significance of the cosmic process, as distinct from that pre-occupation with departmental study, which is the main cause of short views, provides the corrective of any empirical or materialistic tendency. "A little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion; for while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them and go no farther; but when it beholdeth the chain of them confederate, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity."

This general survey of current Thought may be brought to a close by pointing out the underlying unit of intention and conclusions which unite the thinkers considered into one school. Each presents his own point of view, and yet each welcomes and uses the standpoints of the others. The rise of a dominant school of Thought is thus indicated, and, in point of fact, the movement has not yet reached its high-water mark.

There is every reason to think that in future years the work done by the great systematic thinkers as individuals, alone and for themselves, will be done by groups and schools. Without doubt, much of the earlier dominance of thought of a materialistic type was due to the limits of outlook imposed by extreme specialization. The chain of cause was not "viewed confederate." This imposed upon scientists the naturalistic colour derived from their concentration on a limited range of material objects and which they illegitimately transferred to the widest generalization of all. On the other hand, it meant for theologians and philosophers that science was left alone to possess and illegitimately extend its own outlook, draw from its insufficient premises, while they, the

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

philosophers and theologians, went on their own high idealistic way. Hence a severance which has had deplorable consequences. Bergson speaks of the unfortunate and prejudicial effect of the lack of touch between physical science and a wider philosophy: "The masters of modern philosophy were men who had assimilated all the scientific knowledge of their time, and the partial eclipse of metaphysics for the last half century has evidently no other cause than the extraordinary difficulty which the philosopher finds to-day in getting into touch with positive science, which has become far too specialized. But metaphysical intuition, although it can only be obtained through material knowledge, is quite other than the mere summary or synthesis of that knowledge."

The consideration thus advanced by Bergson which, in its wider application also, is of the greatest importance, is more than a justification: it is an explanation of this present survey of current thought. There is a place for a detailed study of the thinkers brought under review, singly and in isolation; but for my purpose, and also in general, the more profitable thing is to show their underlying affinities and the convergence of their views towards a spiritualistic philosophy of life and reality.

The exposition of these views has sufficiently demonstrated the defeat of materialism. No useful apologetic purpose is served by dwelling too long upon an outworn position. The real function, to-day, of Christian apologetic is to show how all the affinities of real Thought, the main current of Philosophy in all times, the present current in the existing leaders of Thought, are with religion and the acknowledgment of God. The further task is to show that the Christian faith which has its own independent data and verification—*independent*, I mean, even of general philosophy—is a faith which deeper thought tends to vindicate, affirm, and for which it provides vehicles of expression.

I may pause to point out that even at this stage much has been gained. The work towards a spiritual philosophy which has been done in recent years is linked and strong. The time will come—there are signs of it—when this revival of reasoned conviction will reach those who depend upon the guidance of others. I may pass to criticism of some of the

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

positions indicated ; indeed, I hope to show that they are by no means all, and that, in the Christian faith, we have something which goes beyond even these positions : but let me here express my indebtedness to these thinkers and my sense of the value of their work—a value which one must constantly appreciate and acknowledge. No one who marks the insight and elevation of thought which characterizes such men as Bosanquet, Royce, Bergson, Le Roy, Ward, Wallace, and others, can fail to see, not only their present value, but also the notable place which they will hold in years to come. Philosophy in England too often hides its light under a bushel, but the English and American names included among recent thinkers alone manifest the real powers of the Anglo-Saxon mind in pure Thought.

To provide a transition to the further argument of this book, and having already sufficiently indicated the Theistic bearings of the teachings of the modern group, I will briefly summarize the salient elements in the movement of current Thought which trend in a definitely Christian direction, and prepare the mind for the reception of distinctively Christian positions :

I. *The disproof of Naturalism*, which clears away many antecedent objections.

II. *The criticism of "Thin Idealism,"* which means the insistence upon *the concrete and living as real*, and leads on to that appreciation of history and historical situations which is indispensable if the Christian facts are to get a due hearing.

III. The establishment of the place of *Intuition* in the gaining of knowledge, which affords a means of appreciating the place of experience in Christianity and in the formation of the doctrine of the Person of Christ.

IV. The rise of *Activism*. The philosophical valuation of Action as a means of interpretation and of oppositions within experience : the contrast between " high and low " : struggle, alternative, the norms and philosophical concepts of " redemption " and " the saving initiative of God." The value of these concepts for a religion of Redemption, such as the Christian religion is, is obvious.

V. The emphasis upon *Personality* prepares the mind for

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

the study of characteristic inward experience, *e.g.*, the characteristic Apostolic experience in its dependence upon Christ. Also, it indicates in its insistence upon the original and non-calculable factors the way towards an affirmative attitude towards the evidence for the fact that a *unique* Person appeared on the stage of history. Disproving of *a priori* objections, as it does, it puts the question where it should be—a question of fact open to the activity of intuition.

VI.—“*Degrees of Reality*,” “*The Transmutation of Values*,” the demand for a reading of the whole in the light of the “*highest Categories*,” supports the characteristic Christian affirmation of the presence of God in Christ, its claim to possess in its experience of contact with a Divine Person both religious *and final* or metaphysical truth.

VII. *The rejection of “the block-system universe”* allows reality to be genuinely original in its products, and gives scope to the ideas of Purpose and the Kingdom of God as an end-in-view.

Christianity is historical, ethical, spiritual, Catholic or universal, monotheistic, redemptive, centres in Christ's mediation—on all these points the thought surveyed affords light or provides an atmosphere favourable for their recognition. No more than this is claimed. The Christian religion has its own independent proof and verification, which I hope to outline, but the distinguishing features of the Christian religion are the fitting crown and end of that knowledge of God which philosophy possesses and presents. That knowledge it takes up, gives to it a new orientation, and adds its own special contribution in virtue of its own witness and energy.

Truth is one. That fuller truth which is implicit in the Christian awareness of Christ is not another truth than that which the philosopher knows and which the mystic sees. It is not another, but it is more. It includes what these know but itself is more. Comprehension, not hostility, is the right attitude of mind towards truth. What we know—truth, as we can grasp it—is for both scientist and theologian, as it is for the simple and devout, who may “read truth hidden from the wise,” finally embodied in a Person. The



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

reverent bowing down before truth is a part of religious obedience to Him Who is the Truth.

In order to make clear the contribution of recent thought, it will be necessary first to indicate the main features of the Christian religion. This will be attempted in the next chapter. Having gained a general view of the chief characteristics of the Christian faith, they will be considered in the light of current conceptions (Chapter III.) ; this consideration will itself afford a transition between our statement of the main lines of contemporary Philosophy and that inclusive view (Chapter IV.) which brings us into sight of the end of our argument.



## CHAPTER II

### THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION : ITS GROUNDS AND CHARACTERISTICS

THE dependence of the Christian religion upon Christ Himself is so evident that our task, if we would set forth the distinguishing features of the religion, is marked out forthwith. We must arrive at the historical facts, especially the facts about Christ. Without anticipating any final view regarding the evidence also, we must discover these facts, in the main, from the pages of the New Testament.

Questions as to the date and authorship of these writings have been much debated, but there are conclusions which have gained general acceptance. With the exception of two or three of the minor Epistles, the New Testament writings were certainly composed by the end of the first or the commencement of the second century.

An important element in recent criticism is the reinstatement of the credibility of the Book of Acts, and the identification of the writer of the "We" sections with the editor of the Third Gospel. The authenticity of four of S. Paul's Epistles has never been seriously challenged—those to the Corinthians, that to the Galatians, and that to the Romans.

"So far as the Synoptic Gospels are concerned, important results have been reached by the methods of literary criticism. (a) It has been shown that the Second Gospel was used in the compilation of the First and Third Gospels. (b) It has been further shown that behind the First and Third Gospels lies a compilation of the Lord's sayings (=Q), which directly, or after passing through intermediate stages, was used by these later Gospels. (c) It has also been made

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

probable that the editor of the Third Gospel used, in addition to Mark and Q, at least a third written source ; but no agreement has been reached as to its scope " (Archdeacon W. C. Allen : art. " Criticism," " Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics," Vol. IV., p. 319).

The presence of a subjective element in the New Testament is now generally recognized, and there no longer prevails an earlier eagerness to maintain the correctness of traditional positions in all their details. But though a close acquaintance with the New Testament writings does not lead us to accept everything recorded as literally exact, it does sustain our conclusion that everywhere there are indications of the unique Personality and influence of Jesus. In fact, some of the subjective elements in the records and letters (*i.e.*, in both Gospels and Epistles) bear strong witness to the standpoint from which they are written : that standpoint of faith in an exalted Lord which characterized the earliest members of the Christian Church.

A modern biographical interest, which certainly was not that of the Apostles and writers of Gospels, tends to obscure, for men of our day, the right method of approach to the composite literary material in the New Testament. With our modern interest we, almost inevitably, consider the logical order of the writings to be : first, Gospels, an account of deeds and sayings ; secondly, Epistles, an outgrowth of and result of contemplation upon the biographical details. Such is not the actual order in date of the rise of the writings. In general, Epistles are prior to Gospels. Prior in date ; prior also in thought and interest for the first generation of Christians. The biographical interest is not prominent in the primitive community ; it is, at least, subordinate to their religious interest. Both Gospels and Epistles are written from the standpoint of faith. The Book of Acts and the earlier Epistles reflect to us the consciousness of the Church at the earliest date of which we have direct evidence. The Gospels arise later—an outflow from the same characteristic consciousness, and in order to serve the missionary activities of the Church.

In order, then, to gain a point of view from which we may rightly estimate the tendencies and value of the Gospels,

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

we must first fix our thoughts on the other half of the New Testament, and especially upon the most primitive elements in Acts and upon the First Epistle of S. Peter. This will prepare us for a consideration of the testimony of S. Paul's greater Epistles, of the Gospels, and of the rest of the New Testament.

The most remote stage of early Christian belief is mirrored most definitely in the sermons of S. Peter recorded in the Book of Acts. They are weighted with the most convincing evidence of the resurrection of Jesus. By that fact they disclose the fact which gave the creative impulse to the infant Church. We find an intensely practical religious outlook, the possession of a community, declared to be owing to the fact of the resurrection. S. Peter's affirmation is that Jesus—well known to his hearers—is the Messiah; that His standing as such is demonstrated by the fact that God has raised Him from the dead, and that therefore mighty works are done by Him.

If we view the primitive material generally, we find the same indications of faith in an exalted Lord as the point of departure for early Christian belief. We do not find, of course, that penetrating grasp of the significance of the fact of the resurrection which marks the work of S. Paul and S. John, but what we do find is none the less revealing on that account. We find that the primitive material discloses all the features of a great movement at its initial stage. This, by itself, lends an authentic touch. The man who does not feel contact with an actual historical situation in these earliest records must be lacking in historical sympathy and insight.

The practical religious outlook, determined by the fact of the resurrection, is given in the earliest literary material. It will take time for that religious outlook to gain its doctrinal expression, but already, in the faith of the Church and in its dependence upon history, we see the characteristic marks of Christian belief. At this stage of primitive belief we see the wonder of the resurrection, with all that it implies, breaking upon the heart and mind of the Church. Confronted with a great and new situation, they begin to take in the bearings of that situation.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

The Easter faith rests upon the appearances of the Risen Lord, but in the background is the image and memory of the Christ of history. He Whom they had known as Rabbi, and had loved and acknowledged as such, Who had been "by wicked hands crucified and slain," was still the same Person Who had "shed forth" the Holy Spirit. The "boldness" of S. Peter and S. John stands out in marked contrast with their depression and dismay at the crucifixion and death. Indeed, here the certainty of an actual historical situation is overwhelmingly convincing. Some very certain testimony was needed to account for such a change as this. S. Peter charges "the rulers, the elders and scribes, Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and the kindred of the high priest" with the guilt of the death of Christ, and proclaims that now by His power, now that He is risen, "the good deed is done to the impotent man." "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand before you whole." Death and Resurrection have not broken the unity of the Person, nor impaired the continuity of the individual. It is by Him, by the One with Whom they "ate and drank after He rose from the dead," that the good deed is done. His presence carries with it more than any subjective influence or mere flash of insight. It means work performed, the extension, in even higher mode, of "the former things," "the things that Jesus began to do and to teach." Jesus does not merely "appear" after His Resurrection. According to the New Testament presentation he so deals with His disciples that they are aware of His own personal presence in most intimate mode.

There is nothing here that can be explained, or explained away, as a subjective vision, or a flash upon the bodily or spiritual eye. The modes of manifestation of Himself are such that they must say, "We have seen the Lord." The many infallible proofs of the Resurrection include this proof that He Who was dead came again with personal witness of Himself: "Then came Jesus, and stood in their midst and said, Peace."

Go back as far as you may in the reflection in the New

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Testament of the belief of the Church, you will not find any other faith than that which rests upon the exalted Lord, the risen One Who died for us and for our salvation. All the facts which finally led to the lofty Christology of S. Paul and S. John are in the possession of the Church at the outset. The very earliest belief includes and means all that inevitably calls forth the summary of doctrine in "the Apostles' Creed." These writings, like the bulk of the New Testament, do not abound with references to incidents of the earthly life. The biographical interest is small—has paled before the religious interest. They do not quote many of the sayings of Jesus. Yet they abound in evidence of the unique influence of the Person Who lived, died and rose again.

At the outset we are at once placed in the flow of the great movement which rose from the work of Christ. Understanding is as yet rudimentary. The eschatological interest is strongly pronounced. Thought still moves within the bounds of national Messianism. But there is an exaltation of soul, a sense of emancipation and of power, which is only waiting for suitable expression. S. Paul and S. John did but make explicit what was implicit in the faith of the earliest Christians, and is reflected in the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

In all these indications of the faith of the first Christians, we find ourselves in the midst of a glowing life confessedly due to the power of the risen and exalted Messiah. To Him prayer is rendered. The Apostolic preaching is concerning Him. The loftiest titles are used to set forth the significance of His Person, including the title "Lord," an Old Testament equivalent for Jehovah. He has His place within the sphere of Godhead, both for devotion and for thought. Raised to the right hand of God, He partakes of the Divine Majesty. By Him the Holy Spirit is sent forth, and in His name is proclaimed the forgiveness of sins.

The conclusion cannot be avoided that, not the idealization of a good and saintly man, but the presence of the risen Lord, authenticated to chosen witnesses, conjoined with memories of the unique life spent among men, alone accounts for the lofty Christological affirmation of the early Church.



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

The basis of this Christology was history and experience: the affirmations were religious and moral, and the metaphysical was seen as moral and religious final truth. The theoretic statements are founded upon the action of redemption. The earliest records unite with the later in the acknowledgment of Christ Jesus as Lord, because He has, upon receptive souls, performed Divine work. He Who can redeem so divinely manifests the distinctive characteristics of Godhood. He Who performs the God-function manifests His own deity.

Already we can perceive the characteristic features of Christian belief. It is a faith resting upon history. It centres in Christ's mediation of grace. The significance of the history is grasped within experience. Divine action manifests the work of the Divine Person. The religious element is primary, but involves and leads on to the metaphysical affirmations.

Looking into the Gospels, we find, in broad outline, and in each writer with individual freedom and particular emphasis, an account of the life, death and resurrection qualified to account for the faith and life of the Church as there disclosed in the Book of Acts and in the earlier Epistles. The reflection of the power of the risen Lord upon the Apostolic consciousness and mirrored in the Epistles answers to the presentation of a unique historical Personality given in the Gospels. Both Gospels and Epistles are written from the standpoint of faith, but in such a way that the One Who creates the faith authenticates both Himself and the necessary features of the history in which He is disclosed. "The New Testament is not a record directly of Christ, but of the thing preached about Christ by those whose preaching made the Church and made historic Christianity. You can, of course, say, if you like, that they misapprehended Christ; that, led by the rabbinic Paul, they squeezed Him into Jewish moulds, and lost the real, human, saintly Christ in a theological figure. You may say this, but what means have you to prove it? You are entirely dependent upon the Apostolic, the Evangelical, the large Pauline view of Christ, whether in Gospel or Epistle" (P. T. Forsyth).

In point of fact, the impression of a great Personality so



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

occupied the writers of the Gospels, as it did the rest of the New Testament writers, so distinguished the life of the primitive Christian community, that no effort is made to fix any chronological scheme or to harmonize details or to present an exhaustive biography. Still, the unique impression made by Jesus is adequately presented and constantly discernible in the New Testament books. It is, however, present as a totality—all in every part. The total impression has that inward coherence and living unity which carries with it its own demonstration. Nothing is due to artifice, but all rises spontaneously as a result from contact with historic fact and personal influence. The picture presented is that of One whose personality, though verily human, yet transcends the limits of human personality as elsewhere given. The Gospels are vehicles of that impression in a living way.

“We cannot, then, rightly view particular events concerning Jesus Christ apart from our whole conception of Him, and this must be formed from all that we can gather as to what He showed Himself to be. Even in the days of the Public Ministry of Jesus, and in the years that immediately followed His crucifixion, faith in Him was a complex thing. It did not arise solely from witnessing His miracles, or from those ‘infallible proofs’ that He had risen from the dead, of which the author of the Acts speaks; but, in addition to these, from the whole effect of His personality upon minds morally and spiritually in a condition to feel it, apart from which neither miracles which He performed, nor His own resurrection, ever sufficed, or could suffice, to create faith.

“It is, then, to the total impression, so to speak, which He made that we have, in the first instance, to turn, and we know what this was primarily from the writings of the New Testament” (Dr. V. H. Stanton: “Jesus Christ and History” (S. P. C. K.), p. 2).

We may set forth some of the significance of the above considerations by saying that, in the main, the writers of the Gospels portrayed the Life of Christ “from within outwards.” They follow the psychological method, and proceed more from intuition than from the scientific habit of mind. That is one secret of their success. Something of

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

the psychological method is necessary for the success even of the most matter-of-fact historian. Isolated events must be combined, linked by some harmonizing principle. And in the presentation of personality, the whole indivisible unity of the life and character must be seen and presented as a whole, which manifests itself through its activities, attitudes and disclosures.

The Gospels were not immediately written after the death of Christ. The interval of time which elapsed caused, it may be, certain historical details to become dim and blurred. But that interval means a clear gain. The work of judicious assimilation and selection went on. All the while, also, the evangelists were "growing up into Christ in all things." Time was secured for the influence of Christ upon many types and classes of men to become apparent. When, at last, for practical purposes and to serve missionary ends, the Gospels rose, in order to fix the oral tradition, what was presented was the truth of the facts set in their wider and enduring context.

The Fact of Christ is more and greater than records of an earthly life. It includes the sway and influence of One Who in virtue of the historical facts—life, death, resurrection, ascension—and in the power of His endless life, made the Church and its Apostolic testimony. As recipients of that influence, the evangelists wrote that they might pass it on to others also. Rather they wrote that the power and presence of Christ might be experienced by their readers. What S. John says of his own Gospel is, in measure and in principle, true of all the Gospels: yes, and of the whole New Testament. "*These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life through His name.*" The New Testament books are written from the standpoint of faith in order to produce faith.

The initial testimony of the New Testament is to the unique effects flowing from the influence of a risen Saviour; but the Gospels provide material which enables us to discover in outline the historical facts which these effects require and presuppose. From them we perceive that, within the limits imposed by a human life, even upon the self-expression of Jesus, prior to the resurrection, the effective agency in securing

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

the loyalty and devotion of disciples was the influence of Personality. This is His witness unto Himself "in the days of His flesh." The great facts of the Resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit from the exalted Lord universalize this influence of Personality. Thereby the influence is made available for all receptive souls. These great events were further means of the disclosing of the range of His spiritual significance and power. The same Jesus Whom men had known when He walked through their corn-fields, was now declared as the Lord Who had defeated sin and death. Still, in more effective mode, with the same influences at a higher power, He continued after the Resurrection to bear witness unto Himself.

His personal contact now is an inward reality. This contact sustains the Church in being, provides the constant proof of its affirmation concerning the Person of Christ. The witness of Christ unto Himself which was the decisive proof of Christ during His earthly years, which was, in fuller mode, the creative agency in the Apostolic consciousness and in the founding of the Church, remains to-day the constant proof that He is the Son of God and our Redeemer.

This testimony of Christ unto Himself is a revelation through action. It means primarily a religious effect, but the religious effect requires, and is the constant source of, doctrine. Its effects are "writ large" upon the pages of the great doctrinal Epistles. All the while this progress of doctrine meant the grasping and framing of the meaning of His constant self-testimony.

The Apostolic age did not end this testimony. The continued experience in the Church, and by the Christian individual, of the redemptive energies, proceeding from the exalted yet present Lord and Life of the Church, constantly confirmed the New Testament presentation of Christ and demonstrated His Divine nature. After S. John and S. Paul it finds its manifestation in countless redeemed persons in all the ages of the Church.

Strike across the history of the Christian Church where you will, there you will find that the experience of the Christian soul authenticates the fact of the contact of the Lord Jesus Christ with and upon the soul. It becomes a growingly

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

realized reality, and the fact that controls the development of doctrine and sets the limits of its restatement.

The basis of this dominating conviction is religious, and, as such, presents uniform features. Its most effective theoretic presentation is the Catholic doctrine on the lines of Athanasius. It justifies Nicea, because Nicea does justice to it, so far as any theoretic statement can do justice to the fact of God in Christ.

The doctrine of the deity of Jesus Christ the Son of God is the intellectual counterpart of the witness of Jesus unto Himself—His self-witness upon the stage of history, within the experience first of disciples, then of Apostles, constantly within the experience of the Church of the redeemed, energetic and open to reception still to-day.

This self-witness confronts this age also. It confronts us in our time of warfare and distress. It approves our righteous dealing and makes us strong both to suffer and to do. It approves even more than it judges, for its lightest touch means life, overcoming, and peace.

Criticism of the New Testament sources only confirms the fact of this more than human Personality. The appreciation of the human element in the Gospels does but confirm and bring out the selective freedom with which the Evangelists stated the influence of Jesus upon their souls in virtue of His historic accomplishment and abiding significance.

But, only when the Impression comes inwardly, when through the witness of the New Testament and the Church, the soul itself is confronted by the activity and presence of its Lord, does the proof of Christ gain its final sway. In such an inward judgment and restoration He is Himself energetic, in the worth of His death for sins and in the power of His endless life. There is, of course, the historical basis of the Christian faith, but it is not solely through an historical judgment that the living presence of the Lord Who "suffered under Pontius Pilate" is known and demonstrated. Men are not solely intellectual machines: they are capable of intuition, endowed with conscience and with the ability to experience spiritual facts in spiritual guise. Within the soul "this same Jesus" still constantly penetrates "that armour in which he trusted," constantly effects the same

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

changes, produces the same effects, as those He effected upon disciples, apostles, Christians in all the ages of the Church.

When that present influence, that direct actual contact, now is effected upon the soul, the divine action of Christ establishes His deity, vindicates the expression of the Apostolic consciousness, justifies and verifies the main lines of the Gospel history. It does all this because it does more. It comes as a religious absolute: which is the absolute in its most real form. It reaches us where we know reality to be. It remakes us at our moral centre. The absolute control proves its finality by really dominating us. Christ bears witness of Himself as he confers actual grace.

The gospel portrait of Christ is finally independent of criticism because it is not finally dependent even upon history. It is itself a super-historic fact, though declared in time. It was portrayed before the foundation of the world. The history itself is knowable as history in virtue of something which is more than history. The effect of Christ within the soul causes us to know what is historic. In, with and under the New Testament presentation of Christ is the presence of the eternal Saviour.

The final use of the Bible is, as it were, sacramental. The final test of its competence and inspiration is its ability to mediate Christ. Christ Himself acts upon the soul with a directness kindred to the action of Conscience. In the working of Conscience we have the demonstration of God as Lawgiver. In the working of Redemption we have the presence of God as Redeemer. Both are moral absolutes, and therefore final metaphysical realities.

It is this penetration of the soul by the exalted Lord which provides the data which Christology is evoked to interpret and set in relation with everything else that is known. This is the unassailable foundation of the distinctive Christian doctrines. The moral is the metaphysical and the final reality is that of Spirit. The characteristic Christian doctrines, Atonement, Deity of Christ, the Divine Tri-unity, are explications of what is included in the experience of redemption effected by Christ.

The material of Christian knowledge being then, as above outlined, it becomes at once clear that Christian thought has



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

no interest in, or place for, any speculation which makes of Christ "the chief of saints," "the great martyr," "the supreme hero." He still hides Himself from those who would "take Him by force to make Him a king." All these are interesting manifestations of the breadth of the appeal made by Christ. They may provide an avenue of approach to the real data of Christian knowledge. Still, in themselves, they are substitutes for, and may easily become obstacles to, the real interpretation of Christ.

The actual Christology which has gained expression in the historic creeds is at root verifiable and is constantly verified. In its essential meaning it is not an addendum to Christian knowledge, but the theoretic counterpart of that knowledge. The objective validity of the doctrine of the Person of Christ inheres in the character of the Christian experience. Those who framed the Catholic doctrine were sharers of that uniform experience of which we are sharers. Our intention, if we realize the real problem, must be the same as theirs. The limits of Christological restatement are provided by the Christian subject-matter. The new must be the old set in the wider modern context, and with current terminology but with identical aims, and, it is to be hoped, an equally clear grasp of the actual data of Christian knowledge.

That which is the point of departure for Christology is also the only fruitful point of approach to the New Testament evidence. In his article on "New Testament Criticism" in the "Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics," Archdeacon A. V. Allen presents this contention with effect. "Historians approach all ancient documents with certain presuppositions, and, as a matter of fact, all must approach the Gospels with some sort of presuppositions in favour of, or against, their testimony." The question of presuppositions in relation to Biblical Criticism demands treatment "in a serious scientific manner."

There is no doubt that the crux of the whole question of New Testament Criticism is here. As Archdeacon Allen well points out, critics who reach negative conclusions are swayed, in their initial and subsequent attitude of mind, by a presupposition against the acknowledgment of the appearance of a Personality of absolute religious significance. On the

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

other hand, those who reach positive conclusion—in favour of the recognition of a supernatural Person, do so because some prior influence has caused them to adopt a receptive attitude towards the indications of such a Presence.

The element in life which creates this affirmative attitude towards the New Testament evidence regarding life, “is the sustained witness of the Christian consciousness to a Personality now acting upon human life, of which they find the first account in the Gospel history. It has always claimed to be not merely witness to the powerful influence exerted by the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, but witness to the influence of Jesus Himself, exerted on individuals not merely through the record of His life, as the memory of a dead friend may influence one living, but immediately as living Spirit upon living spirit. This sustained witness is a psychological fact that is deserving of more serious treatment than has hitherto been accorded to it. If it is in any sense true as a phenomenon of consciousness, then it necessarily becomes a presupposition with which the inquirer must approach the Gospel evidence.”

Archdeacon Allen further shows how the two different points of view concern approach not only to the Synoptic Gospels, but also the Acts and the Fourth Gospel; in fact, he plainly implies that they affect the attitude of approach to the whole of the New Testament literature.

Two or three questions of high importance are raised by Archdeacon Allen's consideration of presuppositions—the question of a genuinely scientific critical method; the psychological question of the permanent influence of the Personality of Jesus, “immediately, as Spirit upon living spirit”; the question of the factors involved in a strictly historical attitude.

An important distinction which must be kept in mind in relation to our inquiry is that between *literary criticism* and *historical criticism*. Literary criticism of the New Testament has led to some important results upon which general agreement has been reached by scholars. Historical criticism, however, is still at the mercy of the preconceptions of the individual historians. The conclusions are reached as the outcome of the tendencies of the inquirer. The principles

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

of the "mythical" school and of the "religio-historical" method are decided by a prior outlook which they designate, without warrant, "scientific." The categories of causality and evolution are to be applied to the investigation of the data. Small wonder, then, that the results are negative, and include a denial especially of the historic actuality of a supernatural Person. The destructive work was already done in the mind of the investigator.

Starting with the idea—hopelessly unscientific and untrue, by the way—that there can be no genuine surprises for the mind, it is not to be expected that there could be any unique, still less any supernatural, features in their results. Assuming, as they do, that the facts which call for investigation must be natural facts, they have no alternative but to mark down at once all indications of the miraculous or supernatural, both of character and act, as due to imagination or to a colouring derived from superstition.

Nothing can be more certain than the fact that the above attitude of mind marks out the way to miss the truth. Not only is there an incalculable factor in human personality to which this attitude of mind fails to do justice, but an unscientific habit of thought is involved in the existence of a negative prejudice. William James states forcefully the real implications of such an attitude: "A rule which would absolutely prevent me from acknowledging certain kinds of truth, if those kinds of truth were really there, would be an irrational rule."\*

We must allow Nature to be genuinely original in her possibilities. Still more must we allow Spirit to be capable of its free orientations. "For a new object we might have even to create a new concept."† After all, if a supernatural Person should be evidenced on the plane of history, the fact would have to be acknowledged. The denial of the possibility is not scientific, and the prior assumption that the fact cannot be presented, when in reality its recognition can only do justice to the situation, is quite an invalid presupposition.

In point of fact, the religio-historical method is *Naturalism in the realm of historical study extended into the investigation*

\* "The Will to Believe," p. 28.

† Bergson: "Creative Evolution," p. 51.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

*of New Testament history.* The dead-level uniformity scheme, "the block-system Universe" theory, is extended to this department of investigation also. The religio-historical method applied to Gospel criticism is condemned by its prior conceptions. The best thought of to-day sets towards the recognition of the incessant uprising of that, which from former experience, might be unpredictable.

The religio-historical method, *i.e.*, Naturalism in the realm of New Testament history, is finally discredited, because of the collapse of Naturalism at the hands of a scientific philosophy. Anything which undermines the basis and presuppositions of the scheme destroys the whole theory along with its results. The death of the religio-historical method is involved in that death of Naturalism which current Thought has brought about. Its claim to be a scientific method is voided by the criticism which we have seen to be destructive of the whole of materialism. Mechanism cannot provide a total view of reality.

*Naturalism in the realm of New Testament Criticism shares, therefore, the fate of all Naturalism at the hands of modern science and of a critical philosophy.* Its defeat in respect of investigation of matter, life and personality includes its defeat in the realm of History and, therefore, regarding New Testament investigation.

It is not really necessary to add anything to emphasize the cogency of this *disproof of the religio-historical method*, or Naturalism in the department of Biblical historical criticism; its conclusions are implicit in its premises, and these being epistemologically invalid, its conclusions are worthless and its claim to be "scientific" shown to be meaningless. Still, it may be of interest to dwell upon the essential hollowness of what to many still seems a substantial structure, and the prestige of the method may still persist, despite its disproof.

We noticed, in the previous chapter of this book, how thinkers like Bergson, Bosanquet, Royce and others (scientific investigators, psychologists and philosophers), have dwelt upon the lingering on of a mode of thought which the real sweep of Thought has passed beyond. I have somewhere seen the happy phrase, "astronomical intimidation," used

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

of the contention that because man is so little, when compared with "the starry heights, rush of suns, roll of systems, fiery clash of meteorites," he must be of little or no account in the counsels of God. That also represents a state of mind which, by the way, Thought has transcended. Certainly, when we consider how for many years Naturalism dominated, intimidated and repressed thought (as Le Roy and others have pointed out) before the rise of that current movement of a critical and spiritual philosophy of which I have earlier given an outline, there is such a thing as *Naturalistic Intimidation*. The structure of Naturalism, imposing as it seemed, collapsed at once before the simple and profound generalization that "Thought is necessary to propound any theory." Any who may remain in danger of yielding to the influence of this intimidation in Biblical criticism should recall the well-known fable of the invisible shirt. It only needed a child in the crowd to say, "See, he is naked!" and all the farce was over.

"The main difficulties which many will feel with criticism of this kind are these:

"(a) It starts from presuppositions with which the evidence of the narratives immediately conflicts.

"(b) Its methods of explaining the origin and genesis of much of the evidence are conjectural and fanciful—not the application of scientific principle, but an appeal to any or every supposed cause that might have given rise to the creation of the evidence.

"(c) Its results are hopelessly precarious. The Jesus Who emerges from its labours is sometimes a simple-minded lover of God, who is crushed between the political and theological wheels of His day; sometimes an ethical teacher of high value; sometimes a dreamy enthusiast, who died because He deluded Himself into the belief that He was the Messianic King. The Gospels, as manipulated by the uncertain methods of this sort of criticism, seem capable of yielding a picture of any sort of Jesus that the critic desires." (W. C. Allen: "New Testament Criticism," *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IV., p. 320.)

It has been shown that some, whose bent and general inclination is away from Naturalism, approach the study of New Testament history from a more receptive standpoint.



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

The criticism which undermines Naturalism goes far to vindicate these, and this fact, combined with other positive considerations, provides the opportunity of indicating *the main lines of a scientific method of approach to the New Testament literature.*

The man who approaches the New Testament for purposes of historical valuation and study, with a prior anticipation of finding the record of a supernatural, has abundant justification for so doing. There is a positive influence which has determined his attitude. *Even before he came to the New Testament as an historical critic of course he knew something about the New Testament ;* he had read or had heard read at least portions of it ; perhaps he sometimes went to Church ; certainly he had heard named the name of Christ. A subtle influence from these facts was all the while acting upon him, *almost unconsciously he had come under the spell of Christ* through the knowledge of Him mediated from the Bible and the Church. He was hardly aware of it, but something all the while was drawing him on, some influence of Spirit over spirit, noiseless as the fall of dew, powerful as the quiet force of gravitation.

That force, already acting upon our historical critic of positive tendency, was distilled from the atmosphere of the Church of Christ, from the Bible, from the current knowledge of Christian facts and principles. The fact is that the impression of the Personality of Jesus is so enwrought in the warp and woof of Bible and Church, that we have an intuition of Christ. He is not found at the close of a critical process, but is discoverable in all and any part of the New Testament, even in the actual translation which we possess. His witness to Himself is upon us even before we exhaustively review the evidence and the literature. He is in the whole New Testament not merely as a character is enwrought in the whole of a work of fiction, but as One Who uses the records to be the media or instruments of the manifestation of Himself. Even a cursory reading of the Gospels, prior to any criticism whatsoever, so brings Christ before us, that we are aware of Him, not as a friend remembers a departed or absent friend, as actually present with and active upon us now, "immediately as Spirit upon living spirit."

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

The Fact of Christ, the total impress of His Personality, is so embedded in the whole of the New Testament, so enwrought in every fibre of the literature, that a receptive soul cannot miss its proof and power. The intuition of this ultimate Fact is so definite and creative, that along with it is given the discernment of all the facts, in their main outlines, facts of life, death, rising, again in their relation to the disclosure of Himself and of His significance as the Bearer of Redemption.

The marvellous unity of the impression of the Personality in its unfolding through life, death, resurrection and ascension, is so impressed upon the New Testament taken as a whole—despite errors in translation, subjective elements in the Evangelists, impossibilities of harmonization of details or of the working out of a chronological scheme—that it may be itself used to correct items even in the narratives themselves. The vindication of the positive or receptive attitude towards the New Testament presentation of a supernatural Person lies in the fact that such an attitude is already determined by a positive fact, in its operation prior to the exercise of the function of historical critic—the fact of the self-witness of Jesus.

This fact is implied and is itself creative of that awareness of Christ which marks the Christian consciousness. It is a psychological fact or phenomenon of consciousness the significance of which should not be overlooked. The evidence that it is a fact is found, not in Apostolic experience alone, but also in the constant experience of the Church and of the Christian individual. The New Testament arose in response to it, and it is the abiding factor in the vitality of the Christian organism and the constant source of vindication of the Christian creeds and the body of Christian doctrine.

This, which is the thing given in the characteristic Christian experience of all times, is also the fact which gave rise to the New Testament literature. That literature all through testifies to the distinctive effects of the Personality of Christ upon the Apostles and writers of Gospels. The concern of the writers is not to present the *ipsissima verba* of Christ, nor even the details of the history, but so to present Him in His total significance for the human soul, that the soul

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

may come to know Him for Himself through His own saving action upon it. They write as they did because the prior Fact, the fact prior to all Gospels and Epistles, prior to all notes, records, memories whatsoever and creative of them all, acted upon them, the prior fact of the redeeming and restoring influence of the Person of Jesus Christ. They write, that is to say, not as impartial biographers, but as devoted and commissioned missionaries.

This little book is meant to be an introduction to a scientific apologetic. As such it is not an appraisalment of modern methods in apologetic. On the contrary, it is a return to the primitive methods—those of S. Paul and S. John. The lesson taught by the earliest theologians of the Church is one that contemporary thought reinforces.

The true method of approach to the New Testament literature is not "the religio-historical," but the "religio-psychological." It is not without significance that S. Paul and S. John make few references in detail to the sayings and deeds of Jesus. They knew the history, at least in its broad outlines, but they depend upon the significance of that history for the spiritual life, and as the means whereby we may come to know Christ, "no more after the flesh." They do not despise the history of the "days of His flesh"—this implied in their presentation. They do not empty that history of meaning; rather they see its meaning in the light of all that Jesus continues to do and to teach. They behold Him constantly, in virtue of His days when He tabernacled amongst us, in His continuous work, in the power of His accomplishment upon the souls of men.

These are the considerations which require scientific valuation for the purposes both of a scientific attitude towards the New Testament history and for a scientific Christian apologetic. Their importance in relation to Biblical Criticism is thus set forth by Archdeacon Allen: "Criticism of the Gospels and Acts which is based on quite unscientific presupposition—that is the point—introduces hopeless confusion into New Testament criticism. It condemns offhand certain narratives as fictitious, and then invents the most improbable causes to account for their genesis and growth. This is not criticism based on principle, but arbitrary and captious

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

rejection of evidence. We want, if possible, some sort of scientific method or principle, and this can be reached only by a preliminary investigation of all the facts. Christ as presented in the Gospels, Christ as experienced in history, Christ as experienced in modern life—is this all of a piece, one long consecutive witness to a supernatural Christ? If so, whatever other method may be wrong, nothing can be more fundamentally unsound than the attempt to go to the Gospels, and from the first to eliminate that element to which Gospels, history, modern consciousness, all alike bear testimony.”

The grounds of Christian faith are in the witness of our Lord unto Himself. The first tokens of that witness are discoverable within the pages of the New Testament. They are there in a kindred (but higher) sense to that in which a character is in a book—one, complex and indivisible. They are there in such a way, that we can see that the Subject was not invented by the writers, but given to them. Behind all the recorded impressions stands One Who called them into being. They are there in such a way that the records become actual vehicles of the Impression—means whereby Christ is so mediated upon the soul, that He acts Himself directly and Personally upon it as Spirit upon spirit, with immediate inward testimony to Himself.

The indications of Personality are not presented in any biographical way. Still, there is a converging testimony, all the more evident because of the elements of personal tendency. In the actual literature which we possess the impression made by Jesus upon the first generations is sufficiently clear to serve its purpose. This impression is so distinct, uniformly distributed, self-consistent, and original, that it bears with it its own guarantees. Concerning the indications of the human and fallible element in the New Testament in association with its Divine and supernatural element, it may be said: “We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God.”

The foundations of Christian belief then are in history and in an experience indissolubly united with the history. The religious factor, the actual reception of grace, is predominant and primary. The doctrinal factor is the outgrowth of and indispensable counterpart of the religious. The actual

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

grace derived from the activity of the living Saviour is the perennial source of recollection and doctrine.

The facts on which Christian faith rests are not separable from the religion. Its foundation is not in any idealism, but is broad-based upon historical data. It is with real facts of sin and sorrow that we are faced in actual human lives and only an actual salvation wrought out on the plane of history can meet our needs. Yet we can discover the full compass of these facts only within the life of the Church. The elements contained in the organism of Christian knowledge are: (1) The Gospel History: recorded with sufficient accuracy to enable us to grasp as a whole the presentation of the Personality of Christ. (2) Apostolic experience: within which the significance of the history is grasped. (3) Constant continuance of the influence of the Exalted Lord: making effective now all that Gospel History and Apostolic experience declare, and conveying the proof of Christ through His constant redemptive action. The New Testament so discloses the Gospel History and the Apostolic experience in their separateness and in their conjunction, that it mediates to us the present fact of Christ. Thus it serves to bear to us the work of the Exalted Lord.

We have been able to see that from the earliest Christian times the loftiest epithets were applied to Christ, and worship, trust and adoration spontaneously given to him. How are we to account for these facts? How are we to account for His central place in the religious life of the Apostolic age? Still more, how are we to account for the place He has occupied, and still occupies, in His Church, and for the religious life of any member thereof? There must have been in His life and work that which was calculated to elicit such response and devotion. And from this the conclusion is obvious that His claims and His influence upon the first Christians must have been such as we find impressed, in broad outlines, in the pages of the Gospels.

There is that in the self-consciousness of Jesus, as that is perceivable from the Gospels, which removes Him from the ranks of ordinary humanity. We cannot face the representation of His unique self-consciousness without feeling that He is destined for resurrection. When we behold how He sets



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Himself over against all the children of men as the sinless one, and as the bearer of salvation, we grasp the fact that in His own nature, while yet among men, He was not merely one of them. The one certainty for Christian faith, which all the testimony of the New Testament and all the experience of the Church confirms, is that He is not merely the best among His equals, nor simply the chief of saints, but the one unique and unapproached Lord and Saviour of the world.

The redemptive significance of Christ creates the problem of His Person. The problem as it was for S. Paul and S. John is identical with the problem as it has been till now and now is for the Church. This problem confronts our age and issues its challenge now as at all times. "The New Testament writers did not think of Christology and of the Atonement without sufficient motives, and so long as their sense of debt to Christ survives, the motives for thinking on the same subjects, and, surely, in the main on the same lines, will survive also."\*

The grounds and characteristic features of the Christian religion, its basis, in the history of the earthly life of Jesus, in the Apostolic experience founded by the resurrection and the presence and activity of Christ through the Spirit—these grounds and this basis are open still to the apprehension of reasonable faith. The faith which finds its record in the New Testament becomes a mirror, which so reflects to us the actual Person, Jesus Christ our Lord, that we may behold Him for ourselves. And when, in the power of His resurrection, He comes inwardly with His own restoring activity, bearing His own salvation, we so have the witness in ourselves that we can say even to writers of the Gospels: "Now we believe, not because of thy saying, but because we have heard Him ourselves and know." There is a point where the historic and the spiritual meet and become one. That point is the penetration of the soul by the living Christ. History becomes present, for it is inlived. The human experience of God, in His redemptive action, decides the issue.

\* J. Denny: "Jesus and the Gospels," p. 101.

## CHAPTER III

### CHRISTIAN BELIEF IN THE LIGHT OF CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

THE brief indication of the grounds and leading features of the Christian faith, given in the last chapter, has been made in order that we may inquire if, or how far, the Christian Belief can be sustained in view of modern knowledge. Does the contemporary Thought, whose main characteristics have been outlined, in the opening chapter of this little book, support Christian views?

We have seen that, of recent years, an important change of direction in the current of thought is clearly evident. Materialism now represents a stage of thought which the live thinking of the day has passed beyond. In its place we have in physical science either a definite affirmative of the necessity for the hypothesis of the soul, to account for observed phenomena, or a general recognition of the rights of a "spiritualistic" philosophy at its own wider level. In psychology and in the realm of the theory of knowledge we have a very wide recognition of the independent and eternal "values" of the spiritual life and a steady affirmation of the necessity for the acknowledgment of the Eternal Spirit, God.

The dominant thought is a philosophy of religion because it is a doctrine of personal idealism, neither extinguishing the soul in the One, nor equating the One solely with the Universe. A further marked tendency is towards a more concrete and definite conception of Reality in the fullness and richness and intensity of its life and inner and reciprocal movement.

The main stream of Thought now bears with it, on its flowing tide, certain definite and strongly marked currents.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Three or four leading affirmations set forth principles and certainties which have been permanently gained. These central ideas crystallize and sum up the dominant lines of contemporary philosophy. It will be well to set down briefly their chief traits, and to show the bearing of each upon the presentation of the Christian religion, the way in which they lead up to definitely Christian affirmations, the means provided by them for the setting forth of salient Christian facts and doctrines. These principles are :

- (i) Personality.
  - (ii) Intuition.
  - (iii) Action.
  - (iv) The Conservation of Values.
  - (v) The Good that is in the Making, comprising the recent stress on teleology, directivity, end-in-view, creative evolution, becoming, and purpose.
  - (vi) The "Thickess," or concrete definiteness of Reality.
- (The above are merely general headings used because of their inclusiveness and importance.)

(i) *Personality.*

A leading feature in the recent movement of Thought is the prominence given to the idea of a "self." The emphasis upon individuality which distinguishes Pragmatism and Personal Idealism remains a characteristic of contemporary philosophy. The criticism of a static Idealism—whether materialistic, or in the form of "the one self-consciousness" theory—rises from the sense that the "self" cannot be explained away as a product of mechanism, nor as an appearance of the absolute. "An ultimate philosophy which analyses us away is thereby exhibiting its failure to achieve its purpose" (F. G. S. Schiller : "Humanism," p. 20).

The search for order and system rises from the activity of the "self." This is the indication of personality on the level of the exercise of intellect. But not only has the self the capacity for so transcending appearances as to penetrate beyond sense-impressions and to interpret them, it is further aware of its own work—aware of itself in the performance of functions which are the active exercise of its own transcendence over the state of being a "thing." The characteristic action of the self in the gaining of knowledge disclosed the fact

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

and energy of spirit, and demonstrate the transcendence of the soul over nature and mechanism.

The foundations of all knowledge are in the actual life of the soul, and the spiritual significance of the individual is the primary and most certain object of knowledge: it is itself the condition of anything being known. The fact of personality is the great central fact of the universe, and the problem of personality is the initial problem for philosophy. The endeavour to penetrate the reality which our own deeper self is or involves, is the motive of Bergson's doctrine of "intuition." To study the life of the spirit, to examine the life of the soul, is the great interest and demand of modern knowledge.

Each department of study carries with it its own appropriate methods and categories. The study of physical facts leads on to a philosophy of science. The study of life, as it discloses itself in consciousness, leads on to a philosophy of life. The study of personality leads on to a metaphysic of the soul.

Both science and philosophy unite in interest in the concrete and distinct individual. The personal fact, the definite being-for-self, is something which the soul means and is for itself in its own distinct inward experience. The incalculable element in personality properly inheres in its spiritual quality. Each distinct personality calls for investigation, reveals itself in its own characteristics, possesses its own unshared inward experience or "being-for-self." In this department of investigation especially, "generalizations are not philosophic."

In the actual life of each self—the definite individual in his own real being—we find the subject matter of a philosophical psychology. The concrete instance is, in each case, the matter provided for investigation. Each distinct soul, in its own proper existence, and in the manifestation of its existence, provides its own material for a study of the soul.

By "a psychological fact" then, in the full meaning of the term, we mean a distinct and spiritual individual. The spiritual facts, facts of character, aims—the total inner life and outward expression of the distinct soul—call in each case for recognition and valuation without the bias of any pre-

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

conceived theory. The scientific study of personality—that is to say, the study of each distinct soul—disclaims and repudiates any *a priori* classification or any mechanical generalization.

This attitude of Thought means an open mind willing and able to receive the impression upon itself of distinctive features of experience. It has for the claims made by Christian experience this advantage, that if there is such an experience, it is open to conviction regarding it.

Now, if there is anywhere a set of psychological facts, such a set of facts is found in the distinct and sustained features of Christian experience. The scientific habit of mind, possessed by the real students of the life of the soul, of distinct personalities, is a *sine qua non* for the presentation of a scientific Christian Apologetic.

If there be—and that there is it will not be difficult to demonstrate—such a thing as a typical and distinct Christian experience, there is certainly an element in current thought receptive of its testimony. Especially as this experience discloses itself in and through particular individuals, there is something here which calls for investigation by the methods of study of religious psychology, and, the facts being shown to be facts, due recognition and valuation of them must be given by a department of knowledge which could only refuse the investigation and recognition by stultifying itself.

The characteristics of the typical Christian experience cannot be stated without the introduction of reference to their professed cause. Indeed, that experience so claims to be an experience of Christ—owing to Him—that the body of psychological facts calling for attention includes the evidence regarding the unique Personality of Jesus Christ. The subject at once takes on a wider reference as it is viewed in its wider bearings, and in the light of its supreme and creative factor. There is a distinct psychological fact, or set of psychological facts, involved in the characteristic inward life of the soul as acted upon by its Cause. There is the further creative and dominant psychological Fact, the witness to the influence of Jesus Himself. The Personality of Jesus, as that is disclosed in the pages of the Gospels and in His constant influence upon men, is the leading and determining fact calling for



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

consideration, both by a Christian Apologetic and by a sound psychological method.

On the most critical view of the New Testament history, we are introduced, as we study the most primitive features of the life and belief of the Christian fellowship, into the midst of a glowing life, the new religious fervour and exaltation of men who have experienced a great awakening. All this experience is by them attributed to the influence and power, to the resurrection and exaltation, of one with whom they had come into contact. Behind all the records of the impressions, and creative of them all, stands One who gave them their characteristic vitality.

There is a wonderful vitality about this impression in its dependence upon Jesus Christ. We see the first Christians gradually assimilating and progressively estimating the significance of a dominating force. Jesus has for them the religious value of God, and this spiritual or personal fact is growingly seen to have important doctrinal consequences. The Personality of Jesus continues to act upon the Church and the Christian soul. He operates upon them as living Spirit upon living spirit, as supreme Person upon personality. The religious interest continues to dominate—for the soul Jesus occupies all the place of God—but the supreme Influence in practical godliness and in the life of the soul leads on to metaphysical affirmation, new and under the direction of the religious impulse. The material of the body of Christian theology, especially of its doctrine of Christ, is present in the characteristic Christian experience from the time of the Apostles. The meaning of the experience is gradually unfolded, and S. Paul and S. John do but give theoretic expression of what is implied in that penetration of the Church by her living Lord and Head, that Personal presence of the Lord Jesus to and within the Church and the Christian member thereof, which these great teachers and thinkers share. The development or clarifying of Christology keeps pace with the constant experience or self-witness of Jesus. The absolute experience persists, marks out the lines of the progress of thought, corrects statements which fail to do justice to the unique value of Christ, controls and quickens the unfolding of the doctrine of the Person of

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Christ. Finally, in the Christology of Nicea, Christian thought, so controlled and directed, gains an adequate and normative statement.

All through the ages of the Christian Church, and still to-day, the same distinctive Christian experience of Christ persists. The evidence thereof includes the affirmation that He is present and energetic now in the power of an endless life, and in virtue of His historical accomplishment as the value of that accomplishment abides in Himself. He does not persist and exercise His influence simply as a gracious memory, but so gives a Divine life within the soul that He is known as a living Person, conferring redemption, awakening loyalty and response. The Christian certainty, as it arises now, includes faith in Christ Jesus as the living, transcendent, and yet present, Lord, and thus spontaneously reproduces the features of the Apostolic faith in its dependence upon the Apostolic experience. The distinctively Christian attitude to Christ, wherein the soul bows down before its Master and Lord, unites the characteristic Christian experience as it is generated to-day with that of all the ages of the Church and with the testimony given in the New Testament to the initial acknowledgment of the Name which is above every name.

The subject matter, then, or body of evidence which is constituted by the Christian facts, not only includes the original witness of the Gospel history conjoined with Apostolic experience: it further includes the Church's affirmation of the constant Presence and activity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the spontaneous uprising of the Christian experience now, in form identical with the original and constant experience, within a Christian soul.

No one has ever stated the evidence for the Church's estimate of the Person of Christ with anything approaching completeness until or unless he has included the present witness of Christ's personal agency and power. There is a point where the history, the facts about Jesus, the testimony of the Apostles, the authority and witness of the Church for and to her Lord, bear with them their own proof. There is a point where the history is inlived, where the authority is vindicated, where the witness becomes matter of individual

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

knowledge and certainty. The soul "knows of the doctrine," has the "witness in itself," when it bows down, in penitence, gratitude and hope, before its present Redeemer and Lord. In contact with ultimate reality the soul sees all that before it may simply have taken on trust. More than respect for tradition, more than devout memory, is implied in the act and movement of allegiance and adoration whereby the soul, for good and all, confides and abandons itself to its redeeming and sanctifying God.

In thus indicating the features of the Christian experience in its characteristic form, we have set forth the body of psychological facts at the foundation of Christian belief; we have indicated that point of departure for Christology which leads on to the metaphysical affirmation of the Deity of Christ; we have given the justification of the body of Christian doctrine which is the heritage of the Catholic Church.

A personality-fact, a fact of psychology in its true meaning, is no less a fact than those empirical physical facts which provide material for investigation and experiment to the physical sciences. Even these material facts, as penetrated and discerned by science, are not the same things as the sense-impressions which gave rise to the investigation. The spiritual or personality-facts, facts of the "self," of "being-for-self," of "a concrete inward experience," facts of the "over-individual within experience"—all the facts which are open to the investigation of a scientific psychology or philosophy of life and reality, are no less facts because they have their own signs and are knowable by methods appropriate for their investigation: methods different from those which are effectual in physical science. The study of the life of the soul, not only in its empirical manifestation, but as it is in itself, as a spiritual entity, and for itself, provides material for knowledge over and above that which material things and processes provide. For such a study the characteristic subject matter of Christian knowledge and experience presents and provides its own data.

The psychological facts of the normative Christian experience, and its concurrent witness to the unique Personality of Christ, call for investigation. They are so certainly facts of

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

the psychological order, so certainly unique, that they can wait in confidence the acceptance of this challenge. An outline of the chief features of the distinctively Christian experience in its dependence upon Christ has here been given in order to show its importance for present-day thought and investigation, and how current philosophy tends to the appreciation and recognition of what always has been the bulwark of Christian belief.

### (ii) *Intuition.*

Only slightly less important than the prominence given now to the facts and ideas associated with human and divine Personality is the stress upon vital factors in knowledge. Intuition, as the means of knowledge of life and reality, of self and meaning, indicates a profound element in the living thought of the day.

Though the raising of Intuition to the height of an indispensable concept for philosophy is the work of Henri Bergson also, by so doing he gives form and expression to ideas and tendencies deeply embedded in the more recent philosophical theories. Le Roy justly points out that anticipations of Bergson's point of view have been for some years in evidence, though this consideration does not detract from the independent value of Bergson's contribution.

"What Ravaisson had only anticipated Mr. Bergson himself accomplishes, with a precision which gives body to the impalpable and floating breadth of first inspiration, with a depth which reviews both proof and theses alike, with a creative originality which prevents the critic who is anxious for justice and precision from insisting on any researches establishing connection of thought.

"One reason for the popularity to-day enjoyed by this new philosophy is doubtless to be found in the very tendencies of the *milieu* in which it is produced and in the aspirations which work it. But, after once remarking these desires, we must further not forget that Mr. Bergson has contributed more than anyone else to awaken them, determine them, and make them become conscious of themselves."\*

The perception of something in life and personality open

\* Le Roy : "Henri Bergson," p. 138, E.T.



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

to discernment, though not to the knowledge which comes by the way of what we ordinarily mean by intellect, directs thought to those perceptions which the doctrine of Intuition seizes and accounts for. Considerations drawn from chemical and physical research lead on to the recognition of something more than mere matter. The study of life demands categories different from and higher than those which are sufficient to set forth results in the realm of physics. And when we come to study mind, not merely as it is manifested in bodily movements, but as it declares itself in its own meaning, still higher forms of thought and theory are necessary for satisfactory interpretation.

The soul as it exists in its own meaning, personality as that is known to the person himself, is the great fact which offers itself for explanation. All forms of theory which remain content with static and impersonal concepts neglect the very evidence which philosophy is called upon to explain and relate to everything else that is known. General ideas and fixed notions set limits to the actual content of experience.

Is there, then, any method by which the inward reality and personal experience of a particular self may be known, entered into, and set forth? By such a question we do not mean can any other self perfectly know and possess the actual knowledge of himself which only the individual self has or can have. There is an impenetrable and absolute severance in the very central centre of personality from all knowledge from outside: the self only entirely knows itself, and is only perfectly experienced by itself unless it be that what the soul is in reality is knowable only by the absolute Spirit. Personality is what it is for the self knowing itself, and not for outside penetration, still less for classification and general description. Still, there abides this fact of a definite concrete personality with its own intense inner life: our own self and other selves. What is that which is being experienced within the self from moment to moment? What are we ourselves? What is the actual meaning and worth of that inward existence which persists despite change and the flow of events?

Such questions as these do not receive their answers by any abstract propositions, nor can they be fully understood,



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

grasped and penetrated, by the intellect alone. The intellect may provide points of view from which such questions may be approached, and may analyse all the considerations involved into their component parts ; but before the demand to know the self itself, the general understanding stands disqualified, hesitating and dismayed.

After all the psychological analyses are made, there still remains that effort of *the sympathetic understanding*, that "intellectual sympathy" which alone can place us within the object so that our own personality, *with its own appropriate means of knowing itself and other selves*, may know after its own right, and deeper, more living, mode. This self-immersion within the experience of others, this grasping of the living movement in its duration through time is the exercise of philosophical intuition, an indispensable condition of that knowledge of living and spiritual reality which philosophy seeks. The independent worth and original spiritual value of the self, as it is in its own being-for-self must not be sacrificed on the altar of any static idealism. And there is a method or instrument of knowledge of life and personality, and of reality, as compact of living personality, which is different from and above intellect in its ordinary mode of working. This method or instrument is *intuition*. Intuition is not so much a problem for philosophy as it is the means whereby philosophy's main task may be accomplished, the task of understanding life, spirit and individuality.

The fact that discernment by means of intuition is a possession of the soul, and, indeed, its characteristic mark in the performance of its function of gaining knowledge of other selves and of living reality has consequences of the highest importance for a philosophy of the spiritual life. Further, it possesses distinct significance regarding one or two of the characteristic marks of Christian belief.

Just as the exercise of intellect depends upon the intellectual qualifications and training of the intelligent individual, so the exercise of intuition depends upon the degree to which the faculty of intuition has been educed and trained. The quality of the work done, the degree and value of the penetration and consequent understanding gained, will depend upon the quality of the organ of intuition, will depend upon

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

the personality itself, the tone of its character, the breadth and tenderness or suppleness of its sympathy, the power that it has to appreciate, its whole wealth of inward vitality and touch. Being more than intellect, something more than the capacity to do the characteristic work of intellect will be required from it. It is the soul itself feeling, seeing, gaining the knowledge for which the sight of the soul is alone equal.

This higher mode of understanding is required for personal discernment, for the right estimation of the character, worth, significance, of any personality. We see it in operation in that attraction or repulsion whereby we are drawn to, or away from, acquaintance or friendship with certain individuals. *We see it best, with its leading features most prominently in action, in that personal perception, acted upon by the Spirit of God, which enabled the Apostles and first Christians progressively to grasp the final significance of Christ.*

The importance of the consideration just stated will at once leap to the mind. We are affirming the place of Intuition in religious knowledge, of the deeper, of the deepest, sort. Intuition means something more than intellect, more than the impartial or cold or calculating ability to codify evidence, to detect discrepancies, to suggest philosophic doubts. It is more essentially dependent upon the actual moral and spiritual quality of the observing and penetrating soul than Intellect is. It is something more even than the sympathetic imagination, for it is sympathetic understanding. Though the term "intuition" is not used, all that it stands for in its most intense and effective form constantly operates in the realm of vital and personal religion, and especially in relation to the perception of the significance of Christ.

The exercise of intuition depending as it does more upon moral quality and spiritual quality, *i.e.*, depending more upon personal holiness, than intellect does, it follows that the discernment of the moral and spiritual worth of an individual is more open to intuition, or, to use another term for the same instrument of knowledge, to personal or spiritual perception, than it is to intellect. That being the case, the function of intuition in the gaining of religious knowledge,

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

rightly so called, can best be grasped by recalling certain crucial New Testament passages which imply its operation or set forth its function :

S. John vii. 17 : " If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

S. John xv. 15 : " The servant knoweth not what his lord doeth."

S. Matthew xi. 25 : " At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

S. Matthew xv. 17 : " Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

I. Corinthians ii. 14 : " The things of the Spirit of God . . . are spiritually discerned."

I. Corinthians xiii. 12 : " Then shall I know even as also I am known."

I. John iv. 8 : " He that loveth not knoweth not God."

In all these passages, and in many more like them, the necessity for something more than intellectual alertness for discernment regarding personality is plainly indicated.

We see intuition in exercise at its highest power in that spiritual or personal discernment which enabled the apostles and evangelists to grasp the significance of Christ. The meaning and value of a person is only partially declared through the precise details of his life. When all such facts are before us, we still need to appreciate the individual who makes them, in their spiritual meaning, what they are. For this we need imaginative insight, sympathetic intuition, moral and spiritual affinity. The whole depth, range and value of the individual may be disclosed in one revealing moment, or it may dawn steadily, quietly and slowly upon the soul ; but, in any case, for such a perception, for such a disclosing, more is needed than historical information or the summing-up of facts. The facts are these—the personality could not come within range of knowledge without them—but the personality itself is understood—in its meaning for itself and in its spiritual value—more by a flash of

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

sympathetic insight or by the powerful influence of constant experience than by the moulds of the understanding.

The apologetic of history and that of experience are intertwined ; each contributes something to the other, but they are, in all vital senses, inseparable. We do not at all grasp the historical actuality of Christ, nor gather up into our minds all the facts about Him, unless we take into the account the influence of His Personality upon the first believers and their growing realization of His value for the life of the soul. We certainly have no records, either in Gospel or Epistle, which do not disclose something gained out of the wealth of the apostolic experience of Christ. Only through such media could we gain a true presentation of personality.

As this influence told upon the first members of the Church, growing irresistibly and without intermission, they grasped the larger final meaning of the Christian facts and of the Christ Himself. The fact of the resurrection unfolded its significance as the risen Lord continued to impress upon their souls His constant presence and activity. The abiding witness of Christ Jesus unto Himself, the union of the believers with Him in one Body to which He constantly imparted life, provided constant evidence of contact with Him in spiritual mode. A kindred direct experience of contact with the exalted Son of God, Who yet comes within and abides in the souls of those who are receptive of His presence and power, constantly authenticates the apostolic estimate of the Divine Person. Spiritual intuition provided the means for grasping the religious value of Christ, and to-day provided the means for realizing His present working and presence. With the metaphysical and theoretic bearing of this religious fact we are not now concerned. It is sufficient for our immediate purpose to have shown that Intuition—one of the chief elements in a philosophical inventory of our personal possessions—means and discloses a spiritual factor within personality, which we may rightly claim as giving an opportunity to make clear one of the chief elements in an apologetic presentation of the grounds of Christian belief.

Intuition being a finer and more penetrating instrument than intellect, a solution of the problem raised by the fact, mentioned by Archdeacon Allen, to which reference has been



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

made—the fact that the criticism of the New Testament is governed and determined by presuppositions, and that the question thus raised clamours for consideration and answer—can now be put forward. Those who approach the investigation of the New Testament literature anticipating supernatural facts, situations, disclosures of a unique Personality, do so because, before the intellectual exercise which they promise themselves, they have already made use of a more appropriate, more discerning, organ of knowledge. In a spiritual universe in which at any time the soul may be confronted by the presence and activity of the living Christ, Whose presence and activity may be discerned by spiritual intuition, it may at any time happen that things hidden from the wise and prudent may be revealed unto babes. If so, in this case, supremely, the babe “wears the philosopher’s mantle,” and has made use of a means of understanding destined to work great things when the real force and value of certain tendencies of present-day Thought are generally recognized and received.

### (iii) *Action.*

Closely connected with the fact of Personality and personality’s means of gaining the deeper knowledge, namely, Intuition, is the place of Action in the affirmation and progress of a real being-for-self.

When once we see within what narrow limits the intellect by itself can work, and its fundamental incapacity to appreciate the deeper phases of truth, we embark upon the use of the other means of gaining knowledge. Reason is still king, only it is seen to involve something more than the static concepts of the intellect. It becomes invested with life, and deeper penetration, more real understanding, more philosophical grip and perception, are attained by the sympathetic effort of intuition. The intellectual abstractions leave life out of account, and just miss personality at the point where it is itself. The movement of intuition implies action—action of the total self in the effort to get to know, and means that truth is reached intuitively through the activity of personal life.

The soul of man is brought into touch with the great and final reality through a process of life. As we immerse our-



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

selves in the living movement of reality, which is Life itself, we come to know reality from within it by the effort of the self, by the effort of the will which prompts the action.

The highest can only be known by the soul which desirously and actively sets its face and directs its whole being towards the highest and the best. We recall the great words already quoted: "He that willeth to do His will shall know." The deeper meaning of Activism is summed up in these greatest of all words. We have every reason to approach the consideration of the meaning and function of Action with anticipations that it will justify essential Christian positions. In fact, when we think of the place of Intuition in S. Paul's teaching about the conditions of spiritual knowledge, and the place of the right Will and right direction of Action in Our Lord's teaching about the path to insight and the higher Reason, it becomes plain that the modern exponents of the supremacy of Intuition and Action over the static and generalizing Understanding are scribes who have brought out of the treasure-house things old rather than things new—some old and valuable things which have been overlooked.

The ablest exponent of the philosophical significance of Action is undoubtedly R. Eucken, and we must follow in the main his exposition.

A profound realization of the place of "conflict" in human life underlies the main positions of Activism. One of the first to lay stress upon the fact that personality can only be affirmed and strengthened through the overcoming of hostile influences and impressions was the late William James. Indeed, one of the main points in the criticism which Pragmatism directs against the once dominant intellectualistic and static Idealism is its neglect of the element of struggle in life and in experience. "No one can pretend that it doesn't suffer from the faults of remoteness and abstractness. It is eminently a product of what I have ventured to call the rationalistic temper. It disdains empiricism's needs. It substitutes a pallid outline for the real world's richness. It is dapper; it is noble in the bad sense, in the sense in which to be noble is inapt for humble service."

The tendency of the thin idealism which William James

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

criticizes is to explain away or neglect opposition, evil and pain, and to overlook the need for further good yet to be gained. Thus personality is robbed both of its opportunity and of its task. From another point of view also the natural sciences—and especially a philosophy based on their findings alone—tends to limit the outlook and possibilities of the individual, and thus to dictate terms to life. In opposition to these views the Pragmatists and Activists—*e.g.*, William James and R. Eucken—affirm the reality of oppositions within experience and the necessity for a creative spiritual activity. “If this life be not a real fight in which something is eternally gained for the universe by success, it is no better than a game of private theatricals from which one may retire at will. But it feels like a real fight—as if there were something really wild in the universe which we, with all our idealities and faithfulnesses, are needed to redeem.” With a bold venture into the realms of theology, William James adds the interesting speculation: “God Himself may draw vital strength and increase of very being from our fidelity.”

Now it will not do to at once dismiss these utterances from consideration because of their evident over-statement. If there is neglect of certain requirements of thought, at least some such exaggerated presentation of an opposing point of view was required in order that the disqualifications of “thin” idealism might be disclosed. Certainly also there are points in the extracts given above which, corrected by a wider standpoint, fit in with some aspects of a Christian view of God and the world.

“Activism has affinities with Pragmatism especially on its negative side. The philosophies agree in repudiating the intellectualistic persuasion that an adequate solution of the truth-problem may be found through abstract intellectual inquiry. Both agree that action is the key to truth. But they differ profoundly in their views as to the nature of the true source and standard of action.”\*

In common with Pragmatism, Activism insists upon the primacy of life and activity. It, however, goes beyond Pragmatism in its recognition of the independent existence of

\* Boyce Gibson: Rudolf Eucken's “Philosophy of Life,” p. 170.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

truth and reality. The truth at the heart of things, the reality which lies deeper than appearances, may be known—it may be apprehended through an uprising of the spirit. “We are not born into a world of Reason, which needs only to be translated, as it were, into the language of immediacy and enjoyment, but must first seek and win it for ourselves through a radical displacement of our life-centre” (R. Eucken).

This philosophy of the spiritual life is another important indication that the old severance between thought and life is being broken down. “Philosophy is revealing itself more and more clearly as an imperative need of the religious consciousness, and, in endeavouring to meet that need, is coming to recognize the importance and philosophic validity of such categories as those of “redemption,” “love,” and “communion.” “The wall between philosophy and theology is already transparent, and tends to break down entirely whenever a radical earnestness is shown in the reasoned construction of the religious life” (Boyce Gibson).

The extent to which a Reason directed towards the consideration of problems of the self leads towards recognition of Christian postulates is evident from a *résumé* of the chief Activistic doctrines—doctrines of the Universal Spiritual Life, of the need for a radical breach with sense in order that the soul may gain its freedom, of the “new immediacy” created by the sustaining and emancipating Spirit. In fact, these notions read so much like elementary Christian positions, that one may well wonder if they could have come into existence had it not been for the fact of historic Christianity.

Apart from the positive dependence of redemption upon the Christian facts, it is a question if, in a world where the “natural man” is strong, and the impressiveness of “sense and outward things” is so constant and marked, any philosophical generalizations, even of so concrete a type as those of Activism, are sufficient for the actual situation. In fact, when we regard the problem of advance towards personality as it is, not merely for thinkers, but especially for the mass of humanity, it is certain that nothing less than the definite Victory of the Spirit, achieved and manifested by the Incarnation, suffices to accomplish the work,

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

It is nothing but gain that an independent study of the actual problem of personality—its immersion in sense, its need for aspiration, Divine aid, "new immediacy," or direct contact with God, should disclose factors which the Christian religion has always asserted to be there. A just philosophical valuation of personality discloses the problem of the conditions of a true overcoming of "things" and the world: it discloses a problem which finds a Christian solution and of which solution the Christian Church has constant proof. A system of concepts can be no adequate substitute for a faith resting upon history. The study of the religious significance and needs of personality shows what is required, and the historic work and present power of Christ show how, in history and in life, these needs have been and are met. The process whereby the soul gains its own transcendence over the state of being-a-thing is itself the act of God in Christ whereby the soul is liberated through the control of the Spirit. We must have a voice sounding to us from above Nature, from above the Universe, from Him who is greater than the universe, and only the Divine Personal Word can suffice.

The place of Action in the manifestation of personality finds marked emphasis in the presentation of the doctrine of the Person of Christ. From the standpoint of revelation, only One Who *is* what He reveals can perfectly reveal. From the standpoint of redemption—only One Who can deal finally with sin can suffice. Christian experience, experience of the work of Christ in the imparting of forgiveness, life, union, fellowship, implies the Deity of Christ, discloses the fact of His Personality through His work, manifests Him as the Son of God with power. The final meaning of the life spent among men is reached, when, through His constant action, the present deeds of Christ are experienced. His action still manifests His being.

### (iv) *The Conservation of Values.*

We have already seen (Chapter I.) that regarding the absolute ethical Values, our view of their origin must be in keeping with their worth. All that we are bound to estimate best in human culture requires God for its support. Divorced from a theistic setting, the absolute ideals become ineffective.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

The perception and enforcement of the fact that values can only be effectively conserved when God is acknowledged as their Source is one great part of the contribution to a reasonable and spiritual philosophy which recent thinkers have made.

By such a reference back to their origin in God, the impersonal ideals become invested with personal attractiveness and persuasiveness. As thought and desire are directed to the personal Source of the transcendent ideals transition is effected from morality to religion.

Now the religious values themselves, which Thought so distinctly reveals, require the same equation between validity and origin. We have a conjoint ethical and religious interest, for instance, in the transcendence of God, in His Divine Personality, in His moral attributes of Holy Love.

Further, we have an ethical and religious interest in the great affirmation of Christology and of the doctrine of God as unfolded in the light of Christ.

We have a moral and religious interest and stake—not only, not even primarily, a metaphysical and theoretic interest and stake—in the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God, in His humiliation for our salvation, in the fact that *He became poor*, in the Cross. The details of the historic record conserve great religious values. They place self-sacrifice, self-abnegating love at the very heart of Being. We stand in need of a Divine Helper, One Who gave up something in order to bear our burden. Only thus could we be assured of the unfailing sympathy and love of God. We have more than a doctrinal interest in the affirmation that in Christ God came nigh, unloosed the heavy burdens, at great cost to Himself, let the oppressed by sin go free.

There is in the Incarnation, and in the Cross which is its climax, in the self-reduction of the Eternal Son of God, which is His self-affirmation and realization as Holy Love, that which meets an essentially ethical and religious demand of human nature. The divine sympathy, shown in effective and redeeming Deed, is a religious postulate—a final and absolute religious Value. The Gospel history affirms that the Deed was done. Here origin and validity meet. The Church has a vital religious interest in the affirmation of the



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

history. Humanity has a stake in this statement of the Creed which goes down to the roots of its proper good. The ethical demand is for the manifestation on the plane of history of a Divine Redeemer. The Gospels, the record of Apostolic experience, the witness of the Universal Church in all ages, say—and, in fact it is so—and the Redeemer ever liveth.

If the confession of faith in the historic entrance of God within human conditions is denied or neglected, the religious Value—the Divine Sympathy shown in effective Deed, is neutralized or negated. Thus when once seen in its essential meaning the Cross becomes even more than a religious postulate: it becomes a moral and religious absolute.

The type of spiritual experience which marks man as man is dependent and derived. It is quite distinct from that experience of His own Self-existence and independence which belongs to God as God. Can God taste, not only His own essential experience which belongs to Him as the Infinite?—can He taste our human, finite, derived, dependent experience? The question puts briefly the whole question whether there can be in God, Divine sympathy with us in our frailty, effort, limitations.

Can God, remaining Himself, not merely observe man's sorrow and pain, but share mortal and finite troubles, burdens, afflictions? Can He add to His own perfect and unconditioned knowledge of Himself and to His outside observation of all things and creatures dependent upon His will this also—the experience of our limited and conditioned lot? If He may not do so, if He has not done so, He remains remote, exalted, lifted up high over knowledge, but is not our Helper, Friend, Lover of our souls. The Manger, Cross and Tomb say that He has so done. The Stone rolled away from the Sepulchre, the Ascension Mount say that He has carried up the gains of our human experience into the Eternal habitations, that in the Person of the Son of God He has added to His own experience of His unconditioned Godhead this also, the experience of A Man of Sorrows and of One acquainted with grief. That this humiliation, this descent to our finite and conditioned way, should be the glorification

# THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

of Christ and of God glorified in Him is involved in God's self-expression of Himself as Holy Love.

“What lacks then of perfection fit for God,  
But just the instance which this tale supplies  
Of love without a limit? So is strength,  
So is intelligence: Let love be so,  
Unlimited in its self-sacrifice,  
Then is the tale true and God shows complete.”

Humanity, further, has a great practical and ethical interest in the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. He Who cares how His children live alone cares how they live together. There is no assured speculative basis for an altruistic ethic except in the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. And yet that doctrine really rests ultimately on the authority of Jesus, on His self-consciousness as the Son who alone reveals the Father, on His work which manifests the Father in fatherly deeds. The Fatherhood of God means more than His power and wisdom: it means His forgiving grace and holy loving-kindness. Apart from the Incarnation and the Cross it has no form and content. Apart from Christ's achievement of redemption it remains an unvindicated aspiration of the soul. Again the principles of Origin and Validity, of the Conservation of Values, show how Humanity's need is only met by positive and fundamental Credal statements. If Christ be dethroned from His place within the sphere of Godhead, if the definite Christian recognition of His deity be displaced or rejected, the ethical and religious Value, the assurance that God's attitude to us is that of a Divine Father, is voided and made of no account.

Akin to, and indeed of a piece with, the religious value and basis of the Fatherhood of God declared in the Son of God is the moral and religious value of the doctrine of the Trinity. When the Church, through her spokesman Athanasius, threw off the Arian yoke, she vindicated her own awareness of the significance of Christ and conserved her own religious values. “The place of Athanasius as a great religious leader has been obscured by his position as a theologian.” The central citadel, for him, was a spiritual intuition, a fundamental spiritual fact, the knowledge that his

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

own salvation wrought by Christ was the work of God. The idea continually recurs that only if the Son is identical in nature and essence with the Father can we speak of the Divine unity or be confident of the forgiveness of sins and union with God. Arius satisfies neither religion nor reason. The Fatherhood is planted firmly within the Godhead only as the Sonship is affirmed to be eternal. The interest here is predominantly religious, in this context the metaphysical is the ethical, for the moral is the absolutely real. The idea is not separable from its basis in history, but itself discloses the final and absolute ground in Reality, whence flows the revelation and accomplishment in time. What absolutely *is* has been manifested in Christ Who *is* what He reveals. What for ever works has been effected by the Doer Who doing His own works does the works of God. The historic Incarnation is the manifestation in time of an eternal fact. The Fatherhood of God is seen to be eternal and intrinsic as the Sonship is seen as eternal and intrinsic within the Godhead.

The eternal Fatherhood does not come into being, it does not even wait for perfect realization and manifestation until Jesus comes forth from God. God abides eternally in the Unity of the Father and the Son within the eternal life of the Spirit. The fullness of the life of God is no indefinite complexity. The Trinitarian doctrine discloses the living quality of the being and life of the Godhead, gives its determinate form and outline, while it negates any thought which is not guided by the Christian sources in history and Apostolic experience. The manifestation of God, which rests upon the revelation conveyed historically, affirms an inner wealth of living being, and negates an indefinite or vague variety or content of existence.

The spiritual Reason, awakened by the facts of human personality and the reality of Spirit, may find rest, along with Religious aspiration, in the thought and reality of the Divine Trinity. Our beatitude in, and demand for, love is then seen as a reflection or outflow of that abiding in Love which characterizes the inner life of God. Religion has a supreme interest in the certitude of a God Who has Life and Love in Himself. Reason also has a supreme interest in a unified

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

world-view gained through a philosophical theology. No sooner do we pass beyond a static conception of life and individuality, and rise to the consideration that "we are persons not by what we exclude, but by what we include," no sooner are we made aware of what is implied in "a common consciousness," than we begin to see the worth, value and inevitableness of the Christian doctrine of God. In Fatherhood and Sonship we discern living distinctions which unified within the life of Godhead make that Life the intense reality which it is.

When we have gained the Christian view of the Living God we possess a point from which His impulse to create, His activity in redemption, sanctification, unification—the whole drama of historic descent and saving influence, becomes luminous and self-authenticating. The Personality of God, with its inner wealth of content, with its love and life abiding in itself, is seen as the originating cause of our own human life, love, going out beyond self. The Son Who abides with the Father and the Holy Ghost, One God, blessed for ever, appears as the source and origin of all that is best in human life and relations.

Not a God Who is just "the Universal Becoming"—a potentiality rather than an existence, not an impersonal or unknowable principle or power revealed in phenomena, not the absentee mechanician of a frigid Deism, but a living God, having Life in Himself—knowable in the face of Jesus Christ, unknowable in His love which passes knowledge—a God suitable for the adoration and trust of the passionate and deep human heart—a Fire that burns yet is not consumed: such is the God Whom we know through Christ—no remote Absolute, no loveless Thought. Concerning Him we may reverse a well-known dictum, and say: "The proper study of mankind is God."

(v) *The Good that is being made.*

There is an important element in recent thought which may be, for want of a better heading, summed up in the phrase used for the heading of this section. The older Idealism has been much criticized by recent thinkers for its "static" or "stagnant" concepts. It so stated its idea of the Good and of Reality as to practically exclude any neces-



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

sity for effort. All the features of difficulty, sin, and sorrow in existence only required to be viewed from the absolute standpoint, and then they would appear as elements in a perfectly harmonious picture.

The failure to take the elements of opposition, pain and evil in the world quite seriously tended to limit the possibilities of the human being. The absolutely good being now given, there seemed nothing to be really gained through strife. Human personality had no real task and no real spiritual freedom.

There are, without doubt, valuable elements in the earlier types of thought—elements which an extreme reaction may unfortunately overlook. The Good can only be achieved if the pursuit of it is more than a venture and the guarantee of its victory present in the will and purpose of God. Still, a universe where, without more ado, the good is already achieved—and we could see it to be so if, to accomplish the impossible, we could view it from the standpoint of the Absolute—has no place for personality, because it gives no scope for personal improvement.

No sooner, however, do we start from the standpoint of the individual soul, than the real emptiness of static Idealism becomes evident. Spirit and personality are not facts already made effectual in the present, or, given, they are affirmed and gained through effort, through overcoming of the outward, through aspiration towards and creation of a new order of values by Divine Aid.

No reasonable view can be held regarding the teleology of the personal life, regarding the immanent Purpose and End in View, unless something can be gained by spiritual success. The value for Christian thought of the present emphasis upon the Good that may yet be won, the task that may be performed to the increase of the total amount of good in the Universe, is obvious. The coming Kingdom of God, for which we most pray and work, is a fundamental Christian idea. The radical displacement of the life's centre from the given and outward to the possible and inward, through the grace of God, is implied in regeneration and spiritual progress. In a very deep sense the spiritual order is yet in the making and for its final sway and effectiveness we are called upon



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

to co-operate with God. All depends upon the personal persistence and endeavour with which we face and overcome the would-be dominance of things and the outward in the interests of the soul, in harmony with the Will of God and in His Strength.

"We live in the conviction that the possibilities of the universe have not yet been played out, and that our spiritual life still finds itself battling in mid flood, with much of the world's work still before it."

The positive recognition of evil in the universe, the demand for sustained loyalty and courage in the accomplishment of the spiritual task—these are truths which find their best expression in a Christian setting. A world in which spiritual freedom and victory can only be gained through strife is one in which the historic Redemption must be needed and welcomed, and the phase of thought which we have outlined prepares the mind to acknowledge its necessity and to receive its power. After all, in this matter, Philosophy but says again what S. Paul said of old: "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind." And the contention that we are called upon to co-operate in the production in ourselves of a higher spiritual type of life, and also to bring about "new heavens and a new earth," but repeats the great affirmation of an apostle: "The creation itself shall be redeemed into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

In that great phrase S. Paul sums up all that is permanent—and what is permanent there is much and decisive and original—in "Creative Evolution," "Directivity," "Teleology of the Spiritual Life," "End," "Purpose." This indication of an anticipation of these great ideas is not meant as a depreciation of their worth and the originality of thought and insight which marks them: it is no depreciation of the moderns: it is an appreciation of S. Paul.

(vi) *The "Thickness" of Reality.*

William James contrasts with the "thinness" of static idealism, reality in its concrete definiteness or "thickness," the wealth of its inner content. The emphasis is not merely upon the hard and composite nature of things, the stiffness of their opposition to spiritual uprising and assertion, but

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

also to the complex and varied richness of the real and ultimate. The over-emphasis of this realization leads to pluralism, the belief in the existence of independent spiritual factors or persons, but its real value consists in the effort to appreciate human personality and the positive and definite character of the absolute Spirit. In a general way this emphasis upon a measure of indeterminateness within Reality sufficient to allow for personal risk, freedom, opportunity and task, continues to mark modern Thought. The heading of this section conveniently sums up an important feature of the philosophy of religion and personality.

The tendency noted is one which, in the main, Christian faith may welcome. In the earlier "thin" idealism there was the tendency so to present the ultimate as an unfolding of the logical process, or of the subject-object relation, as to empty the Divine Personality of any positive character and to erect a set of colourless principles into the place of definite personal character and Life. It neglected personality because it took all appearances and all centres of will and spiritual force as mere extensions or unfoldings of a single Self-consciousness. Itself nominally the antithesis of Materialism, it so tended to equate the "all" with the absolute Spirit, that no room could be found for the human individual with his choice, will and desire.

Such a concept of the Absolute required to be modified in the interests both of a vital and personal conception of God and of the worth and place of personality. The modification of the "thin" concept alone made possible the present emphasis upon the philosophical value of the categories of "grace," "redemption," "fellowship," which are so vital for a philosophy of religion in general and for Christianity in particular. Without doubt the modification of the earlier theory of the Absolute needed to be made.

Still, when we have granted the value of, and necessity for, this modification, we have to be on our guard against any over-statement. One of the most necessary postulates for a working theory of life is that of the underlying unity of the universe. Indeed, the stable order and unity of things, the existence of a cosmos, is a given datum for both thought and action. Our expectations are based upon our confidence

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

in the regularity of cosmic order and law. Pluralism is no more a successful interpretation of life and reality than is the law of Substance or the doctrine of the one Self-consciousness. The real and persistent trend of Thought is away from the quasi-impersonal or thin idealism which for so many years was dominant and towards a vital Theism which leaves room for a personal Deity and the dependent spiritual centres which owe their existence to His Will. The idea of God which belongs to personalism contains enough of determinateness to meet all the needs of science, and at the same time discloses place and scope for the exercise of moral responsibility and for the highest and deepest spiritual fellowship and communion with God. "God not only eternally defines Himself and so is self-existent eternally, but He is likewise freely defined as self-existent by every other self-defining being" (Howison: "Limits of Evolution," p. 356).

The correction of intellectualism and the recognition that reality is "full of souls" means that Truth, to be known as Truth, must be effective, must do work of restoration and redemption, in a world where there is brokenness, disorder, sorrow and sin. The more the definite and concrete features in appearance and in reality, are appreciated, the more clear it will become that only out of historical manifestation and deed effected here among men redemption can come. A philosophy of spiritual freedom must be a philosophy of grace, and the problem of grace being to make effectual a redemption for men historically limited and determined, the work of restoration must be centralized, wrought out, in history and among men. The salvation wrought out by Christ meets a need which the analysis of human need and experience shows to be most real.

The transcendent value of personality—its self-affirmation as more than a thing or piece of Nature—calls to a transcendent Word and a supernatural Environment for its confirmation and support. A supernatural Revelation and Redemption alone can meet the needs which mark man as man. We are not parts of Nature because we do not find our complete satisfaction there, nor there the environment of all that our soul intends and includes. Nature, silent about spiritual freedom, is further silent about forgiveness. It is

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

out of human history only that our effective strengthening and restoration can come. And yet not out of history in general or as a mere totality—for the witness of history in general is too dubious, uncertain, full of cross-currents. The Word and Act of God must be centralized and made definite in one Personal Deed and Word, localized in time, eternal in value. Apart from the Redeemer, apart from the historic message and accomplishment of Jesus, the real needs of the human individual and of the race are not met. The requirements of personality, immersed in sense, and yet in idea and possibility transcendent over things and the outward, are provided for when at a specific point in history the absolute and all-sufficient Redeemer appears. Apart from this historic word and deed the problem of personality is merely stated by general philosophy and not solved.

The thought of to-day with its emphasis upon the concrete and definite, its assertion of the varied richness and fullness of content within the real vital universe, gives the Christian faith a marked opportunity for the presentation of its historical argument, of the redemption and manifestation wrought by God on earth among men. When we consider the difference in real trend and outlook of the dominant Personalism from that of the eighteenth century Deism and the nineteenth-century Naturalism and static quasi-impersonal Idealism, the scope for a statement of a philosophy of redemption and grace, and especially for Christian beliefs based on the historic intervention of God for salvation, is very great indeed. For more than was formerly the case the actual living and progressive Thought of the times provides avenues of approach to Christianity, means of explaining, stating, proving, the meaning and truth of the Christian Creed.

It would, however, be a mistake, and a misreading of the purpose of this little book, to imagine that the proof of the Christian religion depends upon the justification or vindication of the philosophical propositions recognized and enforced by current Thought. The propositions themselves are, in their right context and associations, doubtless valid and worthy of reception. But the Christian religion is not the final result of a series of intellectual, ethical, personalistic arguments.



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

It is not, essentially, the last word of a syllogism nor the necessary conclusion of a process of abstract reasoning. Christianity abides in its own right, depends upon its own witness, rests upon its own infallible proofs.

And yet it is not hostile to the truth which science discovers and philosophy contemplates and clarifies. Claiming to be the Truth—truth itself in its highest activity and manifestation, it anticipates, welcomes, states itself in view of, investigation and findings of truth from all quarters, these also being, in their own degree and at their appropriate level, manifestations and disclosures of reality. Christianity also is a missionary religion, and the unfolding of its meaning, its explication in view of all other knowledge, is imposed upon it by its nature owing to the command of the Church's Lord to make disciples among all nations. The task of Apologetics is not one that the Church can take up or abandon at will—the duty of commending the truth as it is in Jesus inheres in the functions of the "Spirit-bearing Body of Christ." The performance of the Divine commission of the Church includes both the presentation of the Faith in its independent evidence and truth, and also its vindication, appeal and enforcement, before men with their actual and present thoughts, desires and aspirations, so far as those are right and true. The example of Jesus, how He commended the Gospel, must always fortify and control the Christian who seeks to defensively state the Faith. The eminent reasonableness, both of His claims, and of the Church's doctrine of her Lord, is best of all disclosed in words which reveal the real intention of the argument for Christianity: "Judge ye what I say."

The fact that the Christian religion has its own independent witness and verification is one that the scientific attitude towards evidence cannot fail to allow. It is hardly necessary to add that it would make its own appeal, and convey its own proof, even if that attitude were the contrary of what it legitimately must be. All presuppositions of historic relativity are broken by the fact of Christ. What before might be rightly held to be inconceivable is known as actual when the Person of Christ, as depicted in the Gospels and certified by the Church, produces its overmastering effect.



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Not only does the New Testament picture of Jesus demonstrate its own veracity, but more: Jesus Himself becomes a fact known within experience. The moral and spiritual Reason recognizes Him as the highest fact of which it has become aware. As Jesus, in the power of His resurrection, *by His own present and personal Act*, within the soul, subdues and recreates the soul, He bears present witness of Himself and provides a certainty which no view of history can take away. It is true that the presentation of Christ depends upon historical data in the first instance; but Jesus Himself is so held forth throughout the entire New Testament, that the Gospel picture proves the medium of revelation of a Personality who, in the power of the Spirit, so comes within present consciousness, that the soul is made aware that it is confronted by its redeeming God. The fact of Christ, of His supernatural Personality and power, is finally superior to the changing utterances of historical method. The Gospel portrait of Jesus serves its own ultimate purpose when it so makes aware of Him that, in the power of His action upon us now, we are ourselves aware of His contact, able to authenticate the history, conscious that He does actually redeem and save now by present personal activity. The Christ of experience is the historic Christ now experienced after the power, and according to the modes, of His eternal life.

It may be usefully pointed out that the fact thus outlined is one made capable of presentation for the purposes of Apologetic, in a more effective way than was formerly the case, now Thought has gone beyond the block-system universe. The influence of the hard and fast sequence of types, the *a priori* doctrines of historical relativity and classification of personalities under general headings no longer holds the field. It is now widely recognized that for a new fact we may require a new category. Further, it is generally allowed that phenomena which belong to one class cannot be entirely explained by or accounted for by the concepts and classifications useful or necessary for another class. The categories which are effectual, for instance, in the investigation of lifeless things are not completely effectual in biology. To interpret life a *new* category must be adopted

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

—that of *life* itself. And when we rise higher still in the process of investigation to *consciousness* and to *personality*, other and *higher* categories of *mind* and spirit. It is further generally recognized that, in view of the close association of facts, the lower categories must be understood in the light of the higher. Consciousness must be understood in the light of Spirit, matter in the light of *life*. The emerging of new facts, of a higher order than material facts, in the realm of personality—the existence of mental and spiritual facts in their own higher right—is now a commonplace of instructed Thought.

If among these psychological and spiritual facts there should appear another Fact of altogether higher significance—modern investigation and thought does not on its own principles (as the earlier type of thought did) rule its consideration out of court. Indeed, the strongly entrenched positions of a modern philosophy of reality distinctly make the characteristic utterances of Christian faith, the Christian affirmative of the supernatural Person in history and experience, scientifically available. *Further, if thus, over and above the higher categories which such a philosophy has already vindicated, there should appear the necessity for one more—the highest—and the New Testament history combined with the Christian consciousness affirms that it is even so—it would be the part both of religion and of science to admit the fact.* All the requirements of a complete induction are present in this indication of a unique psychological fact. The fact tells and manifests itself in a way suitable for a personality-fact—the unique Person manifests Himself through unique historical facts, and discloses His unique meaning and Personality through past and present transcendent and supernatural deed. There is something going on all the time within the awareness or self-consciousness of the Christian individual which not only demonstrates the truth of the Church's view of the Person of Christ, but also provides material for a scientific induction, gives a proof, philosophically valid now, of a unique psychological Fact, with unique metaphysical consequences.

Thought is marshalled in the direction of these distinctively Christian tendencies by the impetus of its own inner movement. As a penetrating and sustained attention has been

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

recently given to psychological facts, to problems of personality, the set of the current goes towards, not only the acknowledgment of a personal God, but also towards, the more definitely Christian affirmations. As the present movement becomes growingly aware of its real affinities and of the Christian facts, in so far as they fall within the purview of psychological inquiry and philosophical interpretation, we may with confidence look forward to a rejuvenescence of Christian thought and a widespread revival, first of all among the more educated and then among the masses of the people of Christian conviction and life. It is true that the stronghold of Christian conviction is in the power of Christ over the heart, His disclosure of Himself to those who may not be counted among the wise and prudent of this world. Yet that fact itself, conjoined with the power which He exercises, over master minds, and the demand for knowledge of God—worship of Him with the mind as well as with heart and will—sets in the forefront the inclusive value and power of Christianity, both as religion and doctrine.

The fact that a really adequate and vital type of thought has an inclusive tendency, and a receptive and elastic quality, is well brought out by an extract from Bergson which I will give. I make use of it, in part, to support my contention that the prevailing movement of thought has great positive value and chances of continuance; in part, to justify my method of associating together the names of several really independent thinkers of to-day as though their thoughts were really mutually harmonious and confederate; in part, to vindicate my strong conviction that this type of Thought provides an important means of presenting a valid Christian apologetic. "A philosophy worthy of the name has never said but one thing, and that thing it has rather attempted to say than actually said. And it has only said one thing, because it has only seen one point: and that was not so much vision as contact; this contact supplied an impulse, this impulse a movement, and if this movement, which is a kind of vortex of a certain particular form, is only visible to our eyes by what it has picked up on its path, it is no less true that other dust might equally well have been raised, and that it would still have been the same vortex." The inclusive

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

value of the type of thought which, on limited ranges, has reached such important conclusions as those which have been indicated is well stated toward the end of Le Roy's study of Henri Bergson: "Now, with man, thought, reflection, and clear consciousness appear. At the same time also properly moral qualifications appear; good becomes duty, evil becomes sin. At this precise moment, a new problem begins, demanding the sounding of a new intuition, yet connected at clear and visible points with previous problems." Le Roy is so judicious a judge of the real significance of the new type of thought, that this recognition of the possibility of and need for new intuitions, forms of statement and solution, regarding the higher problems of duty, sin and redemption, carries great weight as an indication of the fruitful way in which the new philosophy may yet approach questions of morality and religion.

It is to its future development that we must turn in hope, as we view the present position of the type of Thought represented by Bergson and Le Roy. It has yet to work out some of its deeper implications. Above all, it has yet to do justice to the underlying idea of all genuine Idealism. The principle of individuality is not rightly stated unless it includes the idea that finite minds are not "the sole vehicles and determinants of teleology," but that "their content is defined and their individuality manifested from a deeper unity through which they co-operate to a harmony transcending their finite purposes." . . . "We cannot think of an intuitive intelligence itself as creating values out of all relation to a whole with determinate content" (Bosanquet: "Individuality and Value," p. 137).



## CHAPTER IV

### THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

**I**N setting forth the truth of the Christian religion, the sources of its strength, appeal and certainty, it is necessary first to state exactly what set of problems the religion solves, what inclusive and fundamental human needs it satisfies. The question resolves itself into these inquiries, What does a human being universally seek from religion and how is that given to him in Christianity in a sense, and to a degree, in which it is not given to him in any other form of religion?

The aid and blessing which the human soul seeks from a religion is always some power and assistance which will enable him to be truly himself. He finds himself thwarted, hindered and limited, a soul incapable of being what he ought to be, incapable of rising to and making effectual the possibilities and real scope of his soul.

This sense of constriction, of something in things and events which "cribs, cabins and confines" both body and spirit, which witnesses to the greatness of the soul, and also to its actual and present hampering bondage, is an essential and characteristic mark of human personality as that is known and evidenced on earth. We live our life, in all its personal intensity and inwardness, at two distinct levels—at the level of "things," or the "flesh," and at the level of "spirit." Our life does not move on a single surface.

The last word of a reasonable philosophy of personality is just the word of S. Paul—"the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary the one to the other." We do not merely acquiesce



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

and remain satisfied with this state of affairs just as it is. We feel that we are bound to subdue or turn, if we may, to the uses of spirit—the higher order of values, a personality which all too readily might stultify itself by compromise with or domination by, the lower order of values, that appropriate for “things.” The soul knows itself as being more than a “thing,” and yet it is relatively bound to the natural order. The question for the soul becomes a question of order or supremacy, a great alternative—which is to rule, “sense” or “spirit.”

The soul maintains and increases its own essential quality by constantly overcoming the lower desires and the pressure of mechanism and things. It feels its right and duty to be free over this lower order of values, but it is constantly immersed in sense. Constantly called, then, to exercise its own freedom over the thralldom of things and sense, in the interests of its own meaning the soul is committed to a perpetual conflict. A candidate for full personality, an individual with the possibility of gaining self-determination, instead of being determined by sense and things, it has to fight inwardly everything that would depress its will, throw it back towards “thinghood.”

Now what is that which makes this striving against “sense” and “things” both possible and actual? Remember we are not concerned here with anything automatic, but with the real action and energy of spirit, will and desire. What does this dual basis of life which makes an arena for a perpetual conflict imply? The pressure of sense and things plainly implies and arises from the mechanical influence of Nature, events, things—it means a first environment of sense. But what does the aspiration of the personality itself, its contrasting of itself against the condition of being “a thing,” its effort towards the dominance of the higher order of values imply? The “old immediacy” of natural things means the presence of natural constraints. Does not the “new immediacy,” the spiritual being dominating sense which the soul strives to be mean something over and above—Nature? What is the Strength in whose power the effort towards spiritual competence is made? What but the strength and of the universal Spirit, God? The very fact that the soul

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

strives to be itself implies the presence and activity of the Spirit. As the soul presses inwardly to gain its own meaning, to advance nearer to its goal in freedom over the outward, there comes about it, there is already implied, the presence and direction of the living God.

The individual grows in awareness that his actual struggle against things and the outward means that with him is the aid of God. The true self-realization which is his immanent goal is seen at one and the same time as his own purpose and beatitude, and as the desire and purpose of God. Failure to progress towards effective personality is seen to be sin, the demand for use of the strength which God supplies is seen to be disobedience to duty and command.

The task which inheres in the nature of the soul constantly abides. Progress towards effective being-for-self only discloses other implications of the conflict. If we fail to subjugate "nature" and "sense" in the interests of our independent personal worth, the mechanical process of nature will invade, materialize, deaden the soul. The de-personalizing constraint of outward things must be constantly overcome as we strive towards the gaining of the ideal.

The idea of the human self, then, contains a revelation of the need of triumph over the restrictions of sense, and, further, demonstrates the fact of contact with God. The problem of personal freedom, of release from the thralldom of sense, of progress towards the gaining of effective personality, is the fundamental problem of religion: it inheres in the fact and characteristics of personality. An effective religion must emancipate, restore, redeem, strengthen the soul.

Only as God, the new Environment of the soul displacing the old immediacy of sense, is obeyed and the strength which He supplies used can the soul gain its freedom, move towards the effective achievement of its ideal. The problem of personal spiritual freedom is the problem of the sovereignty of God.

The emancipating control brings revelation. Reality is attained, not by mere understanding, but through the uprising of the whole personality—feeling, will, thought in the unity of personal action. We experience reality in our personal life and in our contact with God there.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

It is evident, then, that an effective religion reposes on the facts of redemption, saving initiative of God, active sustaining presence. The analysis of the conditions of advance towards self-realization show that an adequate philosophy of life and personality must be a philosophy of religion, and that for such a philosophy the ideas of grace, redemption, strengthening of the soul, are fundamental. The central ideas, then, of the Christian religion are based upon the fundamental facts of personality, the conditions of its growth, its needs arising from its nature and constitution. "The religious view of the world, in all its species, rests on the fact that man in some sense distinguishes himself *in worth* from the phenomena which surround him, and from the influences of nature which press in upon him." All religions are to be estimated and judged from consideration of the degree in which they conserve and confirm for the personality its independence over the depressing and devitalizing influences of mechanism and things.

Now it is one thing to grasp correctly the definition of an effective religion, but it is quite another thing to grasp how the power of vital godliness is made effective in actual historical conditions, and for our souls with their present limitations of time and place. We see that an effective religion must be a power of action and redemption, but the actual power itself does not come *in vacuo*. It is through historical manifestations and in the life of actual persons that the influence of the Spirit is disclosed and made effective. Philosophy may state these conditions and needs as though they came without historical connections, but it is only by means of history that we find the actual agencies of redemption and revelation at work.

The philosophy of personality, then, leaves us with an historical question—has an effective redemption been manifested on the plane of history and among men? The Christian religion gives a positive answer to this question. It owes its origin to, and gains all its sway from, the place of Christ in it. It rests upon the certainty that, owing to the historic redemption wrought by Christ, conjoined with His saving activity now, the problem of religion for the individual has been solved.

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

We have already (in Chapter II.) dwelt upon the evidence that this final and absolute redemption has been accomplished, and that its influence is available now. The Christian religion meets the needs of the soul, because of the place therein of an absolute salvation from sense and sin. It is that religion which meets the human need in a sense which no other religion does or can. The redemption, to which the religion witnesses, is that saving Action of God, accomplished in history, and yet still energetic upon the soul, which is the Work of Christ. The Person of Christ is understood from the final and absolute value of His work.

The Truth of the Christian religion is demonstrated through the solution of the problem of personal religion which is effected by Christ. The historic manifestation meets the actual and permanent needs of the soul. The redemption which is adequate can only be effectively shown—as it is shown in Christ's work—in actual historic effort and saving deed. This historic redeeming Act of the Cross is the final vindication of the moral meaning of the human soul and of the human race. Since human history has a value for God, it has a real significance for ourselves.

The chain of "things," the wheels of chance and circumstance, are not broken until we behold this supernatural redemption and revelation. It is expressly a revelation through emancipating Deed. Dora Greenwell puts this well (*"Colloquia Crucis"*): "Natural religion would seek, undoubtedly, to improve and cultivate; but as it excludes the idea of sin, it scarcely admits that there is anything either in nature or man which requires setting right. Christ's teaching may be often stern and sorrowful, but He does not mock the heart by telling it that it is well that units should be weak and wicked and miserable, so that the world-system may work out its grand beneficent result. With Him the desolate find mercy; the care of Christianity is for particulars. It is Christ Who delays His journey for the one wounded traveller."

The need for a supernatural redemption—for an entrance of God into our historic and conditioned sphere—so evident from the standpoint of individual religion, is also manifestly a demand from the side of religion in its social and racial



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

aspects. The necessity for a word from above Nature gains emphasis from the limitations and temptations which arise from the fact of human association.

"The only way in which we can equate Nature and Grace without losing intellectual integrity and lapsing into a fundamentally unethical conception is by a doctrine of Grace which, in seeing God as the Redeemer of Nature, sees Him first as her Adversary and Judge. If Nature is indeed one with Grace, it is because the act of creation is essentially a *redemptive* act. And redemption implies antagonism: the subduing of chaos to order and beauty, the reclaiming of waste places, the resolving of discord, the overcoming of evil. When we say God 'made' the world, we mean that He brought it, and is still bringing it, out of confusion, lawlessness, disharmony, irrationality, and evil into the order of His own law, harmony, reason and goodness. The love which the mystic sees in Nature is not an idyllic sentiment, but a devouring passion which purifies as by fire; the God he worships is not undifferentiated Immanence, but the Lord Who was crucified and is risen" (E. H. Herman: "Meaning and Value of Mysticism," p. 235).

The Christian Gospel is essentially a supernatural word. Thus it answers to the supernatural quality and trend of personality. Creation is understood in the light of the Cross. The last word is not with Nature, but with Nature's God. The message of forgiveness and love is given by the entrance of God Himself into our sphere. We can bear with the storm because we have heard "a deeper voice across the storm." "To many this claim that God works in holy love seems a most venturesome and unwarrantable assertion. The universe, they say, does not prove, as we study it, that holy love is the motive upon which it is conducted. But Christianity does not claim to have learned this from the universe, but from God Himself, Who has spoken in Christ and made His motive known. In Christ He has explained the universe by manifesting Himself" (Clarke: "Outlines of Theology").

Reason and Revelation meet in the conception of the highest good, and the Christian Revelation provides a point where the demands of reason and the witness of experience unite. A problem which has found varied expression in all



## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

ages—in Aristotle's picture of the perfect man, in Kant's view of immortality, in the drama of Job, in certain Psalms, and in Isaiah's picture of "the suffering servant of Jehovah"—is that of the demand of an adequate sign that the Will which dominates the universe will conserve the gains of virtuous effort and secure the fruits of goodness despite disaster, mischance and death. What sign is there that the Divine Will and Power will bring the soul to its requisite transcendence over sense, will finally establish the Kingdom of God? These postulates are demands of Reason, and hence it is a further demand of Reason that there shall be an historical manifestation sufficient to break the spell of things, and an act calculated to confer needed moral and spiritual incentive. These demands of Reason are not met till we come to the Incarnation and the Cross. The meeting by the Christian religion of this permanent racial problem, conjoined with its solution of the problem of personality, through the Deed and Revelation of God in Christ, is the establishment of the truth of the Christian religion: its constant and verifiable proof.

The fellowship with God, which from the beginning of the world has made saints and prophets, is the proof of His constant interest and care. Before the time of His historic entrance into our midst the intercommunion which God's presence in the soul implies was the source of redemption and revelation. Still, that was not enough. The utterance of God's Word through prophets and seers meant information about Him; but the final and adequate Word could only come when He came Who *is* what He reveals. Then when the absolute solution of the religious problem came there came in the final Revelation. For the problem, as it presents itself to the intelligence, is only the other side of the problem as it presents itself for will and effort. That which is absolute for the moral and religious life is that which is most certainly known. Nothing can possess more of the features of certainty and revelation than an Act of God at the inmost centre of personality.

The task of Christian doctrine is prescribed by the Christian facts and by the Apostolic experience as that is constantly reproduced through the self-witness of Christ to-day within

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

the Church and to the Christian soul. As H. R. Mackintosh says ("Person of Christ," p. viii.): "Dogmatic is called in to fix in lucid conceptual forms the whole rich truth of which faith is sure. The Revelation and self-sacrifice of God in Christ—which forms the very heart of the New Testament message—cannot really be presented to the mind without raising problems of an essentially speculative character. Hence there will always be metaphysic in theology, but it is the implicit metaphysic of faith, moving ever within the sphere of conscience."

The Christian doctrine of God is based upon the redemption and revelation made by Christ. The progress of Christian doctrine is the progressive appreciation of all that it means when we acknowledge that God has been manifested by means of and within the limits of a human life. Christian experience has no interest in any definition of God as the "Unconditioned" or "Absolute"—these negative terms obscure description of His nature in its fullness of life and love. The current Thought of the best exponents of philosophy has modified or discarded these expressions, and their usefulness in Christology is somewhat doubtful. Even the Transcendence of God is not finally definable through the contrasts of "high" and "low," "here" and "there": The Divine Transcendence is moral—"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God of Hosts."

Our final thought of the Redeemer must be the same as that of old—as that which found expression in the ancient formulas. This gives the limits of restatement. The experience which prompts the doctrine being uniform, precise, and identical, the view can be but the old reaffirmed, re-expressed in the thought-forms of our age. The scribe instructed unto the Kingdom brings out of the treasure-house things new and old, but the treasure-house out of which He brings them is neither old nor new, being the contemporary of all the Christian ages.

The problems which are the final problems of the moral consciousness are also the final problems for the Reason. We are made aware in the Cross of the consummation of an act of self-sacrifice on the part of God. The Intending Will which goes forth to self-expression in

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

Creation reaches concentrated and final expression in the Act which redeems. The experience of redemption gives us the point from which we may view the meaning of the cosmic process. Thereby we may see creation as included within redemptive activity and purpose. We are enabled to make our own St. Paul's magnificent intuition: "The Creation itself shall be redeemed from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

The immutability and omnipotence of God are the immutability and omnipotence of holy love. He entrusts us with "the fatal gift of moral freedom," because He is confident in the power and victory of His own self-sacrifice. His love is perfected, perfectly gains its own ends, through suffering, through the Cross. At the Cross we learn not only that God's love is supreme over human sin, hatred, and malice, but that Omnipotence, Infinitude, Absoluteness, are what they are through being aspects, phases, modes of expression, of Love, the comprehensive and final note of the nature of God. Through self-surrender the very Being of God accomplishes His self-realization—that self-realization which is eternally complete in Him Who sees all things in an Eternal Now, sees the End from the Beginning. There is no negation of His omnipotence, infinitude, absoluteness in his complete assertion of Himself as Holy Love. He changes not with the changes within His universe, for He rests in His love, "tasting an infinite bliss, in infinite ways."

The idea of God which is brought to us by the saving Act and revealing Word of Christ is one in which both heart and mind may rest. Something of its meaning may dawn upon us as we consider the age-long problems of life, personality, and work. Unrealized, something of its power and help may enable us :—

"To be mauled to the earth and arise  
And contend for the shade of a word and a thing not seen  
with the eyes,  
With the half of a broken hope for a pillow by night,  
That somehow the right is the right  
And the smooth shall bloom from the rough." (R.L.S.)

But when the deed of God in Christ breaks us to our peace, and we behold the things of God through His gifts of grace

## THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

and restoration, we have set our feet upon a path which leads to a dispensation of the Holy One and knowledge of all things.

The trend of present-day Thought unites with the outcome of a reasonable and critical investigation of the New Testament in focussing attention upon the Personality of Our Lord. Biblical criticism releases us from a mechanical view of the Bible, only to make more evident the reality and meaning of the Son of Man, and as we come increasingly into view of human personality and life in its practical and hidden meaning, our thoughts go forward to the One Who alone is our sufficient Helper and Guide.

Complaint has sometimes, not without a measure of justification, been directed to a tendency among the exponents of the Christian religion to state that religion too exclusively in its negative aspects. It is well to remember that the negative aspect—the turning away from sin—though a necessary part of the movement of the soul towards God—is not the whole of the demand made upon and opportunity given to the soul. If we have failed the great positive aspects of our religion and thus failed to sustain, as we ought, the spirit of the age, it has not been because of any defect in Christianity itself, but because we have neglected a chief portion of its teaching. It is well, at times, for the soul to go into the wilderness, but only that from thence it may return “in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.” The law of Christ is summed up in great positive commands—love to God and to one’s neighbour, and repentance has its perfect work when the soul which has turned away from sin turns towards God, in newness of life, in the strength of God, to work in His vineyard. The man who receives power from on high, from the risen and exalted Lord, will always look for and work towards the establishment of “new heavens and a new earth,” and impose upon the present the values of the life to be.

The present generation is one that has experienced the searching trial and disaster of the war. It is a generation which sees the human task, the individual and social task, in deeper and more exacting guise. For such a generation there is One alone who is sufficient, and many present move-

# THE GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF

ments tend to make Him more evident and clear. Before this age He stands and enunciates the spirit of His message as He announced in the Capernaum synagogue: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and the recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bound, to give unto them that mourn in Zion, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Only a supernatural Word could say that: only a supernatural Act could make it even so.

THE END







1 1012 01247 3080

[illegible]



